

# History of *Alto Frio* Baptist Encampment

A Seventy-Five Year Story



*Meeler Markham*

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Frio River at Alto Frio  
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November, 1996

HISTORY  
OF  
**ALTO FRIO BAPTIST ENCAMPMENT**  
A Seventy-five Year Story  
by Meeler Markham



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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 97-74615

ISBN 1-57502-588-4

Printed in the USA by



3212 East Highway 30 • Kearney, NE 68847 • 1-800-650-7888

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## SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Most of the information in my files regarding the establishment and early years of the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment was secured by me during my tenure as president. As a part of my work as president, I began the publication of a quarterly newsletter, the Alto Frio News. In the News I published, along with current items and announcements, the information secured in interviews, old programs, documents, records and correspondence. Information for the later years has been made available in gracious fashion by Lonnie Rollins, Administrator.

My research sources have been: records of the Encampment, both original and current; records of the Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association; interviews with Roberts and York, initiators and founders; interviews and correspondence with original officers and early-day officers and program personalities; excerpts from the Baptist Standard, the Uvalde Leader-News, the Camp Wood Messenger of Light, Bruce Roberts' Springs From Parched Ground, the Alto Frio News, Encampment Echoes, the Alto Frio Encampment News, and a rough draft of a thesis by James Mabry Short, Jr. who secured much of his information from me. Also, I am deeply indebted to S. C. Hubener, M. M. Fulmer, J. R. Stewart, Hal C. Wingo, Col. J. Stuart Pearce, Fred W. King, Charles Bowes (editor of Encampment Echoes), O. L. Lackey, A. B. Mayhew, H.G. Andrews, Don O. Covington, V. M. O'Hair, Lonnie Rollins, and others.

Thanks are due Cindy Black, secretary, Frio River Baptist Association, for the typing of some dictation. Special thanks are due Kathy Rodriguez, Black Creek Baptist Church, for transcribing dictation, typing manuscripts and helping set the format, and aiding in reworking and proofreading manuscripts.

I dedicate this book to my wife of sixty years, Myrtie Manlove Markham, whose unfeigned love and unending patience made this volume possible.

Meeler Markham

## INTRODUCTION

Alto Frio today is the fulfillment of a seventy-five-year-old dream. Remarkably, the fulfillment exceeds the dream of the original dreamers. How did such abundant over-fulfillment take place? The dream-exceeding fulfillment is the product of the selfless service and the sacrificial giving of self and substance of generations of Baptist dreamers, doers and givers. Certainly, not one of the founders or early day leaders ever dreamed of an encampment with such facilities as are found at Alto Frio now, nor that there would be such varied and effective ministries as characterize the Encampment after three-quarters of a century.

Understandably, my mind has been filled with memories and my heart with emotions as I have researched and written this History of Alto Frio Baptist Encampment.

My first visit to Alto Frio was in the early 1930's. I lived in Camp Wood. To get to Alto Frio we had to go by way of Uvalde as there was no direct and usable road or highway. The highways we traveled were not paved but graveled. I attended with J. R. Stewart, editor of the community newspaper, the Messenger Of Light, at Camp Wood. As a Baptist deacon, he did much printing for the Encampment. We delivered programs and other materials printed by Stewart. The president of the Encampment at that time was O. S. Lattimore, Justice, Court Of Criminal Appeals, Austin. His dignity and skill at presiding impressed me as did his graciousness toward all people. One of the highlights for me was that Mrs. J. B. Tidwell gave me a book-by-book outline of the Bible and a one-volume commentary on the Bible. Another was the President's Address on Sunday afternoon.

Still another person impressed me. She was Sybil Leonard, a student at Baylor College, Belton. She was a platinum blond and a gifted and beautiful young woman. She played the violin with consummate skill and possessed a magnificent soprano voice. Each night following the evening service she conducted the bonfire program. In it all, her Christian commitment was total.

After an on-again, off-again romance with W. A Criswell, she married Woodson Armes, a minister who, for years, was Director, Christian Education Coordinating Board, Baptist General Convention of Texas. He preached the convention sermon in 1953 and again in 1964. Few men have preached the convention sermon more than once. Their son, Paul W. Armes, is President, San Marcos Baptist Academy. She has published several books of poetry.

Then, while pastor of the First Baptist Church, Carrizo Springs, in 1946 I was elected treasurer of the Encampment, succeeding M. M. Fulmer, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Uvalde, and a former president of the Encampment. After serving as treasurer and as a trustee for several years, I was elected president and served in that office from 1953 to 1957.

The following quote from a book published by Broadman in 1969 expresses my continuing attitude:

The Alto Frio Baptist Encampment is held in the canyon country of Texas. Confined to the Ranch House because of illness, I went out on the porch to watch the night come on. I could hear little of the noise of the hustle and bustle at the encampment, but I could hear such ranch sounds as the bleating of sheep and the lowing of cattle. Having grown up in those hills, or at least having spent my teen-age years there, it was quite something for me to experience again. In the rapidly changing light of early evening, I watched those hills change from gold to red-gold, to light purple, to deep purple, and to complete obscurity of darkness. I thought of the statement from Psalms which I choose to read in this way, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills. Whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the Lord."

While I looked at those hills, and as they were being covered by night's cloak, I heard the mighty throng at the encampment, 2,500 strong, singing a song "America," written by a Baptist preacher. For

the first time I remembered that it was the Fourth of July.

I continued to listen to the singing. It stirred my soul. I offered a prayer for the service that evening and for the vice-president, H. Marshall Smith, who was presiding in my place.

I had been anxious about the program and concerned about the ministry of the encampment in a rapidly changing world.

And I thought of the fact that, for the first time in many days, I had had opportunity to take stock, to evaluate, to reassess, to rest. Then, I realized that I needed to get back to the bed. I thought of the final verse of one of Longfellow's poems:

*And the night shall be fill'd with music,  
And the cares that infest the day  
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away.*

I stole away to bed. I remembered: "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:4).

It is my purpose to write a readable, yet factual, history of Alto Frio without burdening the average reader with copious footnotes and references. In this history, I hope and pray that something of the Alto Frio spirit will be sensed, recorded and preserved.

Included in this history will be information about the beginning of Alto Frio; the beginners, or founders; the first encampment; the years of expansion and development; the post-war growth and development; the erection of buildings; the expansion and change in programs and ministries to meet changing needs and demands; the awesome facilities now on the grounds; and the almost unbelievable numbers ministered to at present. People, programs, and properties have always been important.

Alto Frio Baptist Encampment came to be and has developed in unbelievable fashion because God was and is in it. Too, the

Baptist people of the area served, made, and kept it a people's movement and institution. Those who established as well as those who have developed Alto Frio have supported it sacrificially. Though not founded or owned and operated by the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the Encampment is as Baptist as the Convention itself. It is as much a part of Texas Baptist work as any other Texas Baptist entity. That is true because it has a relationship with other Baptist entities that is mutually helpful and supportive. Such a relationship grows out of common interests, objectives, ministries, and beliefs -- as well as fidelity to our common Lord.

Some astute observer said that an institution is but the lengthening shadow of a person. Alto Frio is but the lengthening shadow of many persons: dreamers and doers; servers and sharers; workers and worshippers.

A sage said that, if a movement is to live, it must become a movement of the people. The New Testament says of Jesus that the common people heard Him gladly.

In the history of Alto Frio Baptist Encampment, several generations of Baptist people have loved, served, given to, attended, supported and sacrificed for it, so that the institution might live, be of service, inspiration and an agent of salvation. Those people produced, preserved and are Alto Frio.

Why have I written this history of the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment? I love Alto Frio. I believe God was and is in it. And I believe it met needs in 1920. By being alert to the changing needs and methods of meeting contemporary needs of people Alto Frio remains a viable and useful Baptist institution. I have invested some of my life in Alto Frio. Then, I know what Alto Frio can do for a church that makes the ministries of the Encampment a planned part of its programs.

I have not invented this history. Carefully I have sought to record the what, who, and when of that which has transpired. I have sought to record events, to describe personalities and to state results in their context without clothing them in the needs, emotions, responses, and religious climate of either 1920 or 1995.

Within my severe human limitations I have sought to tell Alto Frio's story. Though painstaking and time consuming, the effort has rewarded me with a coin that the world knows too little of.

Meeler Markham  
Devine, Texas

September, 1996

## Chapter 1

**PRELUDES TO THE ESTABLISHMENT  
OF ALTO FRIO ENCAMPMENT**

Alan A. Stovall, school teacher, school superintendent, county judge, historian and son of Reverend Daniel S. Stovall, pioneer Baptist minister, wrote Nueces Headwater Country, a book about the people and events of early days of the Nueces Canyon Country.

On page 234 of the book the following paragraph is found:

In August, 1907, a Baptist encampment was established for the Montell community. Those instrumental in getting the project started were Dr. J. M. Carroll and E. L. Witt. The encampment grounds were to be located one mile north of Montell near the Witt ranch home. The encampment was to be called the Nueces Canyon Camp Meeting. Dr. Carroll was the preacher for the opening session of the camp. People from all over the canyon country came and made their camps, staying for the entire time of the meeting.

On page 257 of Stovall's book the following paragraph is found:

One of the last encampments to be held at the Montell encampment grounds was in 1910. Dr. J. M. Carroll and his brother, Dr. B. H. Carroll, were there as speakers for the encampment, and Terry Hill recalls that he attended that meeting, and remembers seeing Brother and Mrs. Stovall there with their family.

The author knew Alan Stovall and many members of the family. Too, when the author attended school at Camp Wood, Terry Hill was superintendent. Hill, a very able teacher and later a personal friend, influenced the author greatly.

On page 313 of the Nueces Headwater Country, there is a paragraph about the beginning of Alto Frio Baptist Encampment. While a few of the details of Stovall's paragraph are not consonant with the official records of the Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association or with the early Alto Frio historical information, the statement does provide historical information regarding the establishing of the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment.

The following is a verbatim copy of the statement:

In June, 1920, plans were formulated for the building of a permanent Baptist encampment at Leakey, Texas. Reverend S. M. York of Alamo, Texas, a leader in the Baptist denomination in southwest Texas at that time, was instrumental in getting the plans underway. A committee of prominent Baptist people in the Nueces and Frio Canyons was appointed to see about the selection of an encampment site, and about the purchase of the necessary land. J. H. Davis, of Rio Frio, father of Bob Davis, offered to give forty acres of land, outside the town of Leakey and fronting on the Frio River, for the encampment grounds. The committee decided to accept that offer, and work was soon begun in shaping up the project in time for an encampment in August of 1920. J. H. Erb of Rio Frio was placed in charge of the work. Liberal support for the project was given by people of the Baptist churches of the area. The first encampment began on August 27, 1920. Drs. F. S. Groner, prominent Texas Baptist, and J. C. Hardy, president of Baylor College for Women, were the principal speakers. The first president of the encampment association was Brother Andrews, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Uvalde. On July 2, 1920 the people of Leakey donated \$1500 for the initial work on the encampment.

The Nueces Canyon effort by very prominent Baptists did not endure as a permanent institution. Yet, it seems to have helped provide an awareness of needs and a vision of a possible way to meet them.

About a decade later, it appears that having an encampment in southwest Texas was a dream whose time had come. What had been an effort by a few prominent Baptists came to be a people's movement.

### Conditions In Southwest Texas

The vast area of southwest Texas is a diverse area in nature. It includes the Hill Country, the Rio Grande Plain (often called the brush country) and a segment of the Coastal Plains. There is not a more beautiful area in all of Texas than the Hill Country. The Hill Country is a part of the Edwards Plateau. The plateau is surrounded on three sides with hilly or mountainous outcroppings. There are crystal clear streams lined with spreading live oak, huge cypress and massive pecan trees. Many springs are found. There are caves and caverns in abundance. On the extreme west are the Caverns of Sonora. On the top of the Edwards Plateau is found the Devil's Sinkhole. On the east of the plateau are caves and caverns that have been developed. Among them are Longhorn Caverns and Natural Bridge Caverns. There are many others that have not been developed for tourism purposes and a few that have.

On the west side of the Edwards Plateau is the Devils River, while on the east side are the Guadalupe, Comal and Llano (and other) Rivers. The southern end of the plateau includes the Medina, Sabinal, Frio and Nueces Canyons.

The Balcones Escarpment and the Balcones Fault are very familiar to people today. The escarpment can be seen when one drives west on Highway 90 from San Antonio. The fault is the primary aquifer for the provision of water for many areas from west of Uvalde to San Marcos and New Braunfels. It is the chief source of water for San Antonio. The Alto Frio Encampment is

set in the midst of all this, being in the Frio Canyon not far from the town of Leakey and along the Frio River.

The southwest Texas area is predominantly a ranching, livestock-producing area. Cattle, sheep, goats and some horses are raised on the ranches. Irrigated farms now dot the area. Many of the large ranches which were typical at the time of the establishment of the encampment have been broken up into farms. Some were in the process of being broken up at the time of the establishment of the Encampment.

One town in the area was a world center for growing onions. That area produced enough onions to give the whole world bad breath. The sports teams in the high school there were called "Onions." Still another town was called the "honey capital." One of the world's largest wool warehouses was in a city in the area. One county was the center for angora goat and mohair production. The small county seat town assumed the title of "mohair capital." The offices of the American Angora Goat Breeders Association are still located there.

Interestingly, in the Baptist Standard of November 4, 1920, there was an article regarding the area commonly called Southwest Texas. The area contained about one-sixth of the state of Texas and covered 32 counties. At the time the area described and defined by the writer included eight associations: Del Rio-Uvalde, San Antonio, Gambrell, Austin, Gonzales, San Marcos, Rio Grande (Frio River), and Medina River.

Within those associations were 180 Baptist Churches with a total membership of 20,799. The churches reported 1,092 baptisms during the previous year. Only one Baptist Institution was in the area, San Marcos Baptist Academy.

A look at the condition of the Baptist churches in the area revealed something of the need and something also of the lack of resources. Of the 180 Baptist churches in the eight associations, 50 were without pastors, 31 had no houses of worship, 49 of the churches had full time preaching, seven had preaching three times a month or three-quarter time preaching, 43 had preaching twice a month or were half-time and 81 had preaching only once a month

or quarter time. One of the eight associations did not contain a single self-supporting church, 40 of the churches had no Sunday Schools, 98 had no BYPUs and 80 did not have the women's organizations. There was, and is, a problem which is perhaps peculiar to southwest Texas. It was even more sparsely settled then than now. Including the cities, the population per square mile averaged about fifteen, while out in the country it averaged about ten per square mile. In some of the remotest counties, the population per square mile probably was no more than three. Then, there was the matter of distances that people had to drive for church services and for associational meetings. It was not uncommon for some of the people to drive forty or fifty miles to go to church. Many of them in attending an associational meeting would drive 300 miles.

Yet, the people would attend such meetings.

Bruce Roberts, pioneer pastor in southwest Texas, wrote of the area that the people were "poor, roadless and scattered." He further stated in his book Springs From Parched Ground that there was not a foot of paved highway or bridge over a stream. Stream crossings were concrete slab or sanded and graveled low water crossings.

Baptists were sparse. Baptist churches were far apart. In the days before good highways, many of the people went by train to meetings along and near railroads. Distances were and are great. In the Del Rio-Uvalde Association a pastor had to drive one-hundred sixty miles or more one way to an associational meeting at the other end of the association. Of course, the distances are the same today. But, the roads are better, the cars are faster and the driving time is less. Yet, distances in the area will always remain a problem.

The tenure of pastors was relatively short when the encampment was established. The Baptists in the area felt isolated from the mainstream of Baptist life. And isolation is often only a step from alienation.

The Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association, the Baptist entity that founded the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment, was formed in

1903 from the Rio Grande Baptist Association, an association that had been constituted in 1880 at Frio Town, then the county seat of Frio County. There was not one full time Baptist church in the new association. It may be difficult to comprehend now, but in 1903 the First Baptist Church, Uvalde, was not a full time church. Though constituted in February of 1882, the church had met for a long time in the building of the Presbyterian Church and had part time preaching until well after the organization of the association. The Del Rio Church, constituted July 30, 1887, had only part time preaching until not long before World War I. The area of the Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association included Val Verde, Uvalde, Maverick, Kinney, Edwards, and Real Counties, as well as parts of Bandera and Medina Counties.

It was a post-war time of recovery. There had been a drouth for two years. Farmers and ranchers alike had suffered from it. The boll weevil had ended the production of cotton in the area. Good wool and mohair prices had prevailed, helping stockmen in parts of the association. Because of the drouth, many people in both the cities and the rural areas had moved away.

### The Coming of S. M. York

"God's plan is a man," J. B. Gambrell was often heard to say. And into the Del Rio-Uvalde Association in January of 1919 came S. M. York. His background of experience and his personal gifts fitted him admirably for the task he found in the association. York frequently said that God had been good to him in that He had never sent him to a place he could hurt.

As missionary of the Del Rio-Uvalde Association, S. M. York's first effort was to make a survey of the association to ascertain the needs. The following were the major needs that he observed:

1. The association needed to inform churches and members. It was thought that a publication of the association should be sent to each home free as a part of the effort to inform. The association adopted the plan and elected Brother Bruce Roberts

and Brother Jones, pastors at Utopia and at Del Rio, respectively, to edit and mail the bulletin or mail out. They, of course, served without pay.

2. The Baptist Standard was needed in each home to keep the folk informed of the work of the Baptist General Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. This was accomplished by visiting each church and through the cooperation of the pastors and workers.

3. The great need of the people of that large section of the state, and the association in particular, was to learn something of the Baptist denomination through personal contact with and to hear and meet some of its great preachers, leaders, teachers and singers.

Out of that need, perceived and real, came the idea for an encampment, or something similar to one. Such an entity would require a place of meeting, accessibility, adequate facilities and financial feasibility.

## Chapter 2

### BEGINNINGS

The third major need listed (Chapter 1) by S. M. York for the Del Rio-Uvalde Association pertained to something like a camp meeting, or an encampment, to provide an enlarged fellowship opportunity and to acquaint the people of the area with the great preachers, leaders, singers and teachers that Baptists had in the institutions and in the convention.

Reverend Bruce Roberts had moved to Utopia in June, 1918. A few months later, in January of 1919, Reverend S. M. York came as the missionary of the Del Rio-Uvalde Association. In 1920 Roberts served the association as its moderator. Brother and Mrs. York went to Utopia to discuss with Brother Roberts plans for a Fifth Sunday meeting. This was a part of their tasks as moderator and missionary of the association.

In his book, Springs From Parched Ground, Bruce Roberts provides the following information in regard to the initial move toward the establishment of an encampment:

But for the little incident I am about to record here, this chapter would not have been written....There might never have been an Alto Frio....It was on Saturday night May 22, 1920. York as missionary and I as moderator of the association were to make out the program for the coming Fifth Sunday meeting. It was about 10 pm, and we two were sitting in the dingy little home of the pastor. We were sitting over a smoked little coal-oil lamp. I know it was smoked for though the chimney was cleaned every morning, it was always smoked by bedtime . . .

For some months Brother York had occasionally spoken of a kind of gathering that would bring the

people of the association together. Some of the pastors had thought little about it and Brother C. F. Andrews of Uvalde was with the missionary fully on the need of it. It had sometimes been referred to as a camp-meeting, but generally there was the thought of something more permanent.

Not many of the people in the association had a knowledge of encampments. Brother York had attended the Palacios Encampment. In the thinking of the people such a project would have to be one that did not cost much and there was a question as to how many people it would reach. There were people who thought that nothing of the kind should be undertaken.

York and Roberts talked about the bad roads, the bad river crossings, and of how the people might be marooned by water. They discussed a location and what kind would be needed. There was some discussion about whether there was a church or community in any of the canyons (Nueces, Frio, or Sabinal) that would be able to furnish such a location. Bruce Roberts recorded a bit regarding the urgency for immediate action:

Then Brother York said: "This is the latter part of May. We know that if we are to consider any gathering of this kind for this summer, we must do it at the Fifth Sunday meeting."

They continued to talk of the value of fellowship to God's people. They discussed the contribution to the people and the work of the area that could be made by the outstanding preachers, teachers, singers, and denominational leaders. Regarding that, Roberts wrote in his book the following:

I was doing the writing on the little table between us. Brother York looked past me. One might have thought he was looking at the faded paper on the wall. But he was looking beyond the wall of the room, and beyond the bounds of all physical limitations. In a voice low, but firm, he said: "If

you favor it, you may write it into the program." It was written in.

The Fifth Sunday meeting convened with the Rio Frio Church on Friday, May 28. The association would meet on that Friday, on Saturday, and close out on Sunday. Brother J. H. Erb was the Rio Frio pastor. At a Board meeting on Saturday, May 29, 1920, there was some discussion of an encampment. The Board adjourned until Sunday afternoon at which time there would be a fuller discussion.

The Board reconvened in the afternoon (May 30). Mr. Bob Davis brought the cheering word that his father, Mr. John Davis, was willing to donate for an encampment whatever acreage might be needed on both sides of the river two miles below the town of Leakey. With this to encourage, the Board unanimously voted to hold an encampment to begin August 20, 1920. A committee on location was named as follows. S. M. York, Bob Davis, Hub Heard, O. L. Lackey, D. W. Price, and L. D. Bownds.

After looking at possible locations in the Sabinal, Frio and Nueces Canyons, the Committee On Location finally arrived at the location suggested and offered by Mr. John Davis. S. M. York related the following:

In the giving of the land, John H. Davis said, "I want to make this gift to the Lord of the universe." That statement was very significant for rancher John Davis had not up till that time recognized or accepted Christ as his Savior. The Committee agreed that the location where they stood was the right one. It was stipulated in the preliminary agreement that there be a reversionary clause in the deed. That clause was to the effect "that the property be used for religious purposes only or ownership revert to the original donors." The reversionary clause was made a part of the deed when the land was officially accepted at a June 12 Committee and Executive Board meeting in Uvalde. The land donated included fifty acres located about two miles

south of Leakey along the Frio River. The acreage was later increased by a second gift from Davis.

### **Historic Meeting**

The Executive Board of the Del Rio-Uvalde Association and the Committee On Location met in Uvalde on June 12 to consider the recommendation of the Committee and to consider other matters relative to the Encampment plans adopted by the Executive Board of the Association at the meeting in Rio Frio on May 30. The Committee recommended the acceptance of the offer of land by John H. Davis. The Board adopted the recommendation and proceeded with other business relative to the first encampment. And time was of the essence, for only a little more than two months after the meeting the first session of the Encampment was to begin.

In the very short span of time available, there would have to be an examination of the land title, the execution of a deed, the clearing of the grounds, provisions made for water, money collected, and all planned construction completed. In addition, much equipment and many supplies would have to be purchased, delivered and made ready for use. The Board adopted specific plans calling for the construction of the main tabernacle, two class pavilions, two dormitories, one combination dining hall and kitchen. Then, there were the fencing of the grounds and provision for rest rooms and bathhouses.

A Building Committee was named by the moderator and included: A. B. Mayhew, Uvalde; D. W. Price, Uvalde; and J. M. Wilson, Rocksprings. Mayhew was a businessman and lumber dealer. Price was a prominent businessman in Uvalde. J. M. Wilson was a Rocksprings businessman. In addition, Mayhew served the Association as treasurer. He was asked to serve as treasurer of the Encampment.

Also, the Board authorized the securing of six thousand dollars in loans, credit and services. S. M. York, elected business manager, was given that responsibility. In an interview, York

said, "I was authorized and instructed to secure \$6,000 in cash, credit, materials and services. We did not have one dollar in cash on hand, and did not know where we could obtain one dollar in credit. The pastors had not had time to take the matter up with their churches, so we did not know what to expect from that source. So, with no money in hand, no known credit available, and no collateral as the property had a reversionary clause, I began to explore possibilities."

Bruce Roberts stated that there was not a church in the association that had an adequate house of worship and Christian education, income for a full-time pastor, or any funds on hand.

Yet, in faith, the project was undertaken immediately.

As business manager, York was to oversee the whole project. J. H. Erb, Rio Frio pastor who had been a builder prior to entering the ministry, was put in charge of construction.

The drouth conditions which existed in southwest Texas at the time and the brevity of time available caused the project to seem to be outside the realm of possibility. Nonetheless, the people, in faith and hope, proceeded, believing that it was the will of God and that He would make it all possible. A contract for hauling and construction was let to H. Ray, contractor and consignee for a major oil company. Equipment and building supplies were made available at cost by Mayhew.

There was generated a strong pioneer spirit. That spirit of undertaking the seemingly impossible for the Lord still characterizes the Encampment. Trust that made binding a shake-of-the-hand contract and the will to attempt that which did not seem possible validated the effort and made possible the completion of preparation for session one. It reminds one of a motto from WWII: "The difficult we do today; the impossible takes a little longer." To be specific in this case, "a little longer" was two months and eight days.

### A Name For The Encampment

At the June 12 meeting in Uvalde, a Program Committee was appointed. C. F. Andrews, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Uvalde, was chairman. The names of other members, if any, who were appointed, are not available now. In the publicity and literature sent out by Andrews, he used the name Alto Frio. In Spanish, that means "high cold." The elevation in the hill country is much higher than that of the Rio Grande Plain and of the Coastal Plain. And, anyone who has gone wading or swimming in the Frio River knows that the waters are quite cold.

Andrews did an excellent job in the matter of securing program personalities and leaders.

### Ready

Much credit for the success of the concentrated effort to get buildings constructed, facilities ready and equipment and supplies in hand must go to S. M. York, business manager; J. H. Erb, supervisor of construction; H. Ray, contractor; and A. B. Mayhew.

When August 20 came, believe it or not, things were ready. And the people came. 'Twas a mere miracle.

## Chapter 3

### THE FIRST ENCAMPMENT

The 1920 calendar shows that the first session of Alto Frio Baptist Encampment began on Friday, August 20, and closed on Sunday, August 29. On May 30 at the Executive Board Meeting of the Association at Rio Frio, a date was set for session one of the Encampment and a Committee On Location was appointed. It was June 12, 1920, when the Executive Board and the Committee On Location met in Uvalde and officially acted on the following: the site was selected, officers elected, committees appointed, finances authorized and contracts made.

Amazingly, the First Encampment session began just two months and eight days after those official plans were adopted. An excellent program had been planned and all of those scheduled to appear were present.

Wide publicity had been given the first session. However, no program was printed and circulated. The first program was relatively simple. Yet, it was very effective and inspirational. Dr. I. E. Gates was the preacher and main speaker. He was an engaging, interesting and effective speaker. Moreover, he loved Alto Frio. A biographical sketch about him is in Chapter 6. Dr. J. M. Carroll delivered his famous lectures on "The Trail Of Blood," an historical tracing of Baptist ideas and beliefs from the time of the apostles to the establishment of Baptist churches and associations. There were a number of denominational speakers on the program. Three are specifically mentioned:

Dr. L. E. Finney, state evangelist, presented the cause of evangelism and the use of soul winning methods. The author was his daughter's pastor for several years and has a book by Finney.

Dr. F. S. Groner was Executive Secretary, Baptist General Convention of Texas, serving in that office from 1918 to 1928. Educated in law, he taught school and was a county attorney before entering the ministry in 1905. He served as a pastor and as

a college president (ETBU). A very good speaker, he was also an able executive.

Dr. J. C. Hardy, a native of Mississippi, earned the A. B. and A. M. degrees from Mississippi College (Baptist). He served as superintendent of the Jackson, Mississippi, Public School System from 1890 to 1900. Also, he was president of Mississippi A & M College from 1900 to 1912. Coming to Texas, he served as president of Mary Hardin-Baylor College from 1912 to 1937. Elected president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas in 1932, he served through the 1935 convention.

Singing was under the direction of Professor A. C. Price of San Marcos Academy. The Rev. and Mrs. Gardiner of the San Antonio Baptist Association gave direction to the BYPU (Church Training) and Sunday school work.

Perhaps the highlight of the first Encampment was the conversion of J. H. Davis, the man who had given the land for the Encampment. An article in the Baptist Standard for September of that year gives the following:

Great rejoicing was manifested at the second service held by Brother Gates, when, after a touching appeal to the lost to accept Christ, the Mr. Davis who gave the land for the encampment, a man 73 years old, came forward and surrendered fully to the Savior.

Brother York, in an interview, indicated that at the first session of Alto Frio there were a few officers elected: a president, Reverend C. F. Andrews, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Uvalde; a treasurer, Mr. Arthur B. Mayhew, layman, Uvalde; and a business manager, S. M. York. These three, elected at the June 12 Executive Board meeting, were re-elected and continued to serve.

Of course, there were only a few permanent buildings on the grounds. These were a main tabernacle, two class pavilions, two dormitories, one combination dining hall and kitchen, an office building and some bathhouses. People in southwest Texas at that time did not mind roughing it. There were many tents and not a

few had what we now call cookouts. The place resembled a tent city.

For the first session, a fee of fifty cents per person was charged. It was collected at the gate or upon registration. Money from the fees was used to help defray expenses. The fee was increased to one dollar for the 1921 session. There arose such dissatisfaction over the fee that it was discontinued in 1926, registration being free thereafter.

### Evaluations

In an interview, York said that the first session went far beyond his fondest and biggest dreams. Brother Andrews, program chairman-president of the Encampment, stated in an article:

We are in the Baptist Encampment business down here in the Del Rio-Uvalde Association. We are "dreaming dreams and scheming schemes," but not building castles in the air.

In an article in the Baptist Standard following the 1920 session and before the 1921 session, Andrews wrote:

Nestling among the age-old mountains, whose rugged sides are clothed with the luxuriant green of oak and laurel and cedar, and down by the side of a clear, blue river, teeming with fish which loll lazily in limpid pools overshadowed by the boughs of the 'sighing cypress' and the whispering pecan and poplar, you will come upon the ... grounds of Texas' youngest encampment, Alto Frio.

Subsequent to the first session of Alto Frio, there is found the following statement in the minutes of the Association:

The outstanding work in the association during the past year is without question, the launching and carrying to a successful climax the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment, its conception in the minds and hearts of the brethren: the spirit that dominated

the churches concerning the Encampment, the ready response of everyone to its interest and the glorious Encampment held on the grounds from August 20 to 29, all lead us to believe that the Encampment is a creature of God's will and that His blessings are upon it. We feel that the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment is destined of God to become the great rallying ground and teaching force not only of this association but all Southwest Texas.

Looking back on the 1920 session of Alto Frio Baptist Encampment, Andrews, in retrospect as well as prospect, penned prophetic words published in the Leader-News of July 1, 1921:

No enterprise ever launched in this country means so much to the upbuilding of all the people, in things worthwhile, as this Institution. It will bring into our territory people from far and near; and what is more, it will bring the best people from other parts of the country.

### **Human Interest Happenings**

In the author's Alto Frio files, which date to more than forty years ago, he found an envelope addressed to Bro. S. M. York and postmarked at Pauls Valley, Oklahoma, April 10, 1955. On that envelope were a few notes written during the interview with York. The notes were on the following:

Dr. I. E. Gates was the preacher for the first encampment at Alto Frio in August of 1920. He was a strong supporter of the Encampment after preaching there.

S. M. York and Dr. Gates were in a place of business to visit with a man and to witness to him of Christ. The man not only owned and operated the store but also owned and operated a whiskey still. Gates presented the plan of salvation. He then asked the man if he would kneel and join in a prayer. The man did so. After the prayer, Gates offered the man his hand and asked

him to make a commitment to and profession of faith in Christ. The man took his hand. York, being an immensely practical man, asked, "What are you going to do with that whiskey still?" With emphasis, the man said, "I'll take care of that." He did. He destroyed it.

One of the impressive things about that first session was that the people came in great numbers. The registration was 1,540. That number was far larger than anyone had hoped or dreamed.

Sammy, a Greek from Eagle Pass, made a profession of faith in one of the services. Asked to make a statement, he, impressed by the size of the large crowd, said, "More people -- more witness."

## Chapter 4

### BEGINNERS -- INITIATORS AND FOUNDERS

In Chapter 2, the story of the founding of the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment is told. What kind of folk were the initiators and founders? What qualities did they possess that enabled them to accomplish what was done and done so well? In this Chapter are to be found biographical sketches and brief biographical profiles of each person directly involved in the beginnings of Alto Frio. Several individuals were involved, but S. M. York was the prime initiator and founder. So we begin with a biographical sketch of him.

#### S. M. York



**NINETY YEARS OLD** and recovering from a major operation at Valley Baptist Hospital in Harlingen, the Rev. S.M. York is marking time until he can "get back to my real estate business." The retired minister gives 90 per cent of his earnings to his former church and mission, the Alamo Baptist Church.

Brother S. M. York, the initiator as well as a founder of the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment, was serving as missionary of the Del Rio-Uvalde Association at the time of the establishment of the Encampment. He had come to the association in January of 1919. Information regarding him came from Alto Frio records, newspapers, and several interviews the author had with him. When York was in the hospital, the author interviewed him briefly a day or so before he underwent surgery. The author had invited him to be a guest of the 1955 general encampment session June 27 - July 3. Brother York had built a cabin some years before. He then sold it to the encampment. The encampment Executive Board voted to give him the privilege of occupying it at anytime he was able to do so. Brother York said to me, "I certainly appreciate the opportunity to attend. You tell the folks I'll be there if at all possible and I know that all of the old timers will come by for a visit." He did not get to attend.

York paid tribute to his wife, his companion who worked with him for sixty-one years. He said in an interview that "she never sounded a low note." The story of his life would sound remarkable today because York had the privilege of attending school for only three months before he was married. His wife was his teacher. She used Ray's Arithmetic, the Blue-Backed Speller, McGuffey's Reader, and a New Testament to teach him math, spelling, English and reading.

York was born at the close of the Civil War in Nodaway County, Missouri. Marysville was the county seat. He married at the age of twenty-one. He became a Christian at the age of twenty-six and joined a Baptist church. Until he was in middle life, he served as a deacon. Then, he was set apart to preach by the Sunset Baptist Church in San Antonio, a church long known as Calvary Baptist Church.

He was used in many ways because of his ability to promote and to secure funds. The Executive Board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas employed him to raise two hundred thousand dollars in endowment for Southwestern Baptist

Seminary. In 1925 Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary became an institution of the Southern Baptist Convention, after having been a Texas Baptist institution from its beginning until that time. Later he accepted a call from the Magnolia Park Baptist Church, Houston. While there the church completed a building that was destroyed shortly after by fire. Later he moved to Central Park Church and aided in the erection of a church seating six hundred-considered large at the time. When that building was complete he was called to a Bartlesville, Oklahoma, church as associate pastor. R. C. Blalock was pastor. While there he led in raising funds to build an educational building and to retire the debt on the church. It was his privilege, also, to lead the church in adopting a budget.

Following his years in Bartlesville he was employed by the Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association as missionary. York served the association for eight and one half years. During that time he led the First Baptist Church, Del Rio; First Baptist Church, Hondo; and the Rio Frio Baptist Church in paying off their indebtedness. Also, he led a number of small churches in erecting church buildings and pastor's homes.

In addition to all of the associational work he did, he was a supervisor for the Seventy Five Million Dollar Campaign in the association. When the work that he had been doing was completed in the association, he went to the hospital for three months. York was called to the Alamo Baptist Church in the Rio Grande Valley. Morning services on Sunday were held in the school building and other services in the homes of the members. Under his ministry the church grew to a full time church with a large auditorium and Sunday school rooms.

Though York had little formal education, he had natural qualities, abilities and gifts that more than made up for his lack of formal schooling. That is, he possessed several gifts and a good mind. He used both his mind and gifts for the Lord. Learning from every experience, from every person he knew, and from all of the books that he could find, he spoke good English and had the gift for promotion, administration and fund raising. All of

these served him well as he was missionary of the Del Rio-Uvalde Association and as he served as business manager of the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment.

### Bruce Roberts

Brother Bruce Roberts, an initiator and founder of Alto Frio, served in southwest Texas as pastor and as missionary for more than fifty years. Born at Lockhart, Texas, he was educated at Baylor University. In 1898, he came to southwest Texas to help Pastor Henry Jeffrey in some revival meetings. He detrained in Cotulla on August 26 of that year.

That fall, he was contacted by Brother S. C. Harl of Moore. Roberts had begun his ministry at Lytton Springs near Lockhart about two years before. He accepted the invitation of Harl and got off the train at Moore (Moore Station or Moore Hollow) on November 20, 1898. The next day, November 21, he and Harl drove to Pearsall in late afternoon. The red sand and dirt from the streets were boiling one hundred to two hundred feet into the air. It appeared that the town was on fire. But, it was simply the result of a long drouth, high wind and powder-like red soil. Even the prickly pear was so wilted as to be unfit to use for cattle feed. In January of 1899, he began serving the Moore Baptist Church as pastor. Then, in April of 1899, he moved to Cotulla. The house he rented was one owned by Captain J. H. Rogers of the Texas Rangers. For an extra twenty-five cents a month in rent, the Captain put shutters over the windows. Roberts could hope for a salary of no more than forty dollars per month and the preachers in the area looked forward to the time when they might receive as much as six hundred dollars per year.

Married in 1901, he served many pastorates over many years in south and southwest Texas. He served the Rio Grande Baptist Association as moderator, missionary and clerk. He operated the Gospel Wagon which had been provided by the women of the association. He was moderator of the Del Rio-Uvalde Association in 1920. He and York, on Saturday night, May 22, 1920, worked together in planning the presentation of the idea of

an encampment for the association. The presentation was made at the Fifth Sunday meeting scheduled with the Rio Frio Baptist Church. It began Friday evening, May 28, and continued through Sunday afternoon, May 30.

Roberts served as pastor of many churches between 1899 and his death in the early 1950's. The story of his ministry was written in his own style and published by the Hornsby Press, Uvalde, in 1950.

The first Mrs. Roberts died while he was pastor at Carrizo Springs. He re-married. His second wife was Esther Owen, a member of First Baptist Church. Despite the age difference, the relationship was a happy one. He enabled her to complete her formal education. She taught school and cared well for him during his retirement years.

Roberts stated that he had served in the border country for 51 years as pastor and missionary. For 25 years he served as chaplain of the Old Trail Drivers Association of Texas. Also, he was the first chaplain of the Texas State Ex-Rangers Association.

He died quietly at the advanced age of 88 or 89 in Uvalde, after more than a half century of sacrificial service in the border and brush country.

### C. F. Andrews

Brother C. F. Andrews was Pastor, First Baptist Church, Uvalde, when Alto Frio came to be. He felt, along with others, that there needed to be some institution or some meeting place where the people could get better acquainted with each other, with the denominational leaders and with the great preachers, Bible teachers and singers of the Convention.

Andrews had moved to Texas from Mississippi. He was a man of good education, excellent ability and a real missionary spirit. Those who knew him considered him to be an excellent preacher and a man of very fine appearance. He planned, projected and publicized the first program. Moreover, he presided at the first two sessions. Too, in his church were several key laymen who

helped to found Alto Frio. For these reasons, his biographical sketch is included in this chapter.

The author has a letter received from his son, H. G. Andrews, who, at the time he wrote the letter, was principal of a Houston high school. From that long letter, the main information about Bro. Andrews was secured.

C. F. Andrews' first service after arriving in Texas from Mississippi in 1913 was as pastor at Waelder. His second position was the position of State Board Evangelist. The family lived in San Antonio. In 1916, they moved to Rockdale where Andrews was pastor for two years. In 1917, the family moved to Uvalde where Bro. Andrews became missionary of the Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association. In a short time, he was called to be pastor of First Baptist Church, Uvalde. His chief service to and influence on Alto Frio were his support of the idea, his planning the first programs, and his securing outstanding program personnel. He worked with S. M. York and with J. H. Erb in particular. Also, he was instrumental in getting Dr. I. E. Gates, First Baptist Church, San Antonio, interested in the Encampment and to serve as the preacher the first year.

Thirteen children were born to Bro. and Mrs. Andrews. According to High School Principal Andrews, the third child, Dana, and the thirteenth, Billy, became actors. Dana used his own name and became one of the major movie stars. Billy used the name of Steve Forrest and appeared in many movies including made-for-TV movies. The fourth child, Charles, served Long Beach State University as dean. Others distinguished themselves in business and other vocations and professions.

Andrews was the chairman of the Program Committee. As chairman of that committee, he planned the program, secured the program personalities and presided. He is listed as the first president in the Table of Officers. Some sources say that he was not elected president. Other sources indicate that he was elected president. See Chapter 5 for full information on the matter.

It was he who gave the Encampment its name. In the literature he prepared for circulation prior to and during the first

session, he used the name Alto Frio. The name has endured, and the name Alto Frio has been made official by being included in the Constitution and By Laws and in the Charter.

He made a very real contribution to the Encampment by setting a pattern for securing outstanding preachers, denominational executives, Bible teachers and singers.

## PROFILES OF FOUNDERS

### **Oscar Lackey**

Lackey was a ranchman near Vance, Texas. A deacon, he was active in his church as well as the denomination. He served on the Committee on Location and in other ways.

He was from a strong Baptist family. A sister married a Baptist preacher, Julius P. King. The Lackeys had two daughters. Both married Baptist preachers. Both daughters were very talented in music.

The author knew the family well and was in college with the daughters.

### **Arthur B. Mayhew**

A. B. Mayhew, Uvalde, was a very successful businessman who owned and operated a lumberyard and other businesses. A deacon, he served well through his church. Also, he served as Treasurer, Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association. Too, he served as the first treasurer of the Alto Frio Encampment. The author knew him through Alto Frio business and as a fellow Rotarian. Mayhew served as a member of the original Building Committee.

### **D. W. Price**

D. W. Price, Uvalde and southwest Texas businessman, served his church as a deacon. He served the denomination in a number of ways. He was a member of Alto Frio's Committee On Location and the original Building Committee.

### **L. D. Bownds**

L. D. Bownds was a ranchman from the Sabinal Canyon and a member of the Utopia church. He served on the Committee On Location.

**Hub Heard**

Hub Heard was a ranchman, apparently in the Dry Frio Canyon. There is now a Southern Baptist Church at Reagan Wells in the Dry Frio Canyon. In 1886, a Dry Frio Church (Exile was listed as the pastor's address) affiliated with the Rio Grande Baptist Association. Heard served as a member of the Committee On Location.

**Bob Davis**

Bob Davis, a member of the Committee on Location, was a Frio Canyon rancher. He was the son of John H. Davis who gave the land to Alto Frio.

**J. M. Wilson**

J. M. Wilson, apparently was a Rocksprings businessman active in his church and denomination. He served on the three-member original Building Committee.

## Chapter 5

### OFFICERS

In this Chapter will be found brief biographical sketches of the early officers, a list of the officers of the first forty sessions of the Encampment, a discussion of the first elected officers of Alto Frio and those first elected by the Encampment as such, and personality profiles of key officers and committee members.

In the June 12, 1920 meeting of the Executive Board of the Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association officers were elected or appointed; committees appointed or elected; the land offered by John H. Davis accepted; and the funding of building construction and purchase of equipment authorized.

The officers elected, or appointed, were: S. M. York, business manager; A. B. Mayhew, treasurer; and J. H. Erb, director of construction. The Building Committee, or committee to assist the officers, was appointed or elected, and included A. B. Mayhew, Uvalde, D. W. Price, Uvalde, and J. M. Wilson, Rocksprings. Reverend C. F. Andrews, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Uvalde was elected or appointed Program Chairman and served as presiding officer. In available material, there is no mention of other members of that committee.

The very important Committee on Location, appointed by Moderator Bruce Roberts on May 30, recommended the acceptance of the gift of land from Mr. Davis. That committee included one from the Nueces Canyon (Lackey), one from the Frio Canyon (Davis), one from the Dry Frio Canyon (Heard), one from the Sabinal Canyon (L. W. Bownds), and two from Uvalde (Price and York). Thus, any area of the Association where the Encampment might be located was represented.

### First Elected Officers

Some of the folk who attended the first session in 1920 stated that no officers were elected at the first session of the

Encampment. From such statements, it may be inferred that those elected, or appointed, at the June 12 meeting of the Executive Board simply continued to serve. However, others who attended that first session and were in key positions have stated that three officers were elected during the first session of Alto Frio and were to serve through the 1921 session.

So, let us examine something of what has been said and written.

Bruce Roberts, an initiator and founder, stated, in Chapter 6 of his book, Springs From Parched Ground, that C. F. Andrews was chairman, Program Committee, having been selected for that position at the June 12, 1920 meeting of the association's Executive Board, along with other officers and a committee. Roberts does not mention anything about the election of officers at the 1920 session of the encampment.

In a telephone interview in 1955 (had by S. C. Hubener), Mrs. W. T. "Billy" Mitchell, widow of Billy Mitchell who was president of the encampment from 1921-1927, said that she and her husband attended all of the first encampment with their pastor, I. E. Gates. She further said that no officers were elected at that session by the encampment as such.

In two separate interviews with S. M. York, the author was told that three officers were elected at the first (1920) session of the encampment. No specific question was asked either time, the information coming as York told "his story" of the beginnings. The officers elected, according to York, were: President, C. F. Andrews; Treasurer, A. B. Mayhew; and Business Manager, S. M. York.

James Mabry Short, Jr., wrote a thesis as part of the requirement for a masters degree. That thesis was on Alto Frio Baptist Encampment. In an interview with York, Short was told that only three officers were elected at the first encampment. The interview was held on December 14, 1953, and on page 12 of the thesis there is a statement regarding the election of officers.

They were: a president, Reverend C. F. Andrews, pastor, First Baptist Church, Uvalde; a treasurer,

Mr. A. B. Mayhew, layman, Uvalde; and a business manager, Reverend S. M. York, associational missionary, Del Rio-Uvalde Association. As time went on and the needs of Alto Frio increased, the number of officers and their duties also increased.

Other founders and early officers referred to C. F. Andrews as first president.

It appears to the author that the Del Rio-Uvalde Association (or its Executive Board) elected encampment officers at the 1920 session to serve through the 1921 session. The encampment was the creation and an institution of that Association. So, such action was logical and in order.

However, during the fall and winter of 1920-1921, the area to be served was expanded greatly. First, it was expanded to include the Rio Grande (now Frio River) Association and the San Antonio Association. Later, all of the associations that were in the Southwest Texas Baptist Workers Conference (reported to include twelve associations) accepted the encampment. Such expansion came at the invitation of the Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association. At its Annual Meeting with the First Baptist Church, Del Rio, in October, 1920, the association passed a resolution extending an invitation to other associations to become a part of the encampment. The invitation included an invitation, not only to enjoy the blessings and opportunities, but also to share in the privileges, rights, authority and direction of said encampment.

Thus, by the 1921 session, many associations were involved and the Encampment was not just an institution of the Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association, but of many associations. In keeping with the new status, the Encampment, as such, elected its own officers in 1921.

The first president of the Encampment was C. F. Andrews. His biographical sketch is found in Chapter 4, as is a statement regarding his presidency.

S. M. York was business manager of the Encampment for its beginning years. Obviously, he used much time and energy in getting the Encampment underway. His brief biography is found

getting the Encampment underway. His brief biography is found in Chapter 4. Other information regarding him is to be found in Chapters 2 and 3.

### **Biographical Sketches**

#### **W. T. (Billy) Mitchell**

According to the best information available, W. T. (Billy) Mitchell was the second president of Alto Frio and the first president elected by the Encampment as such. He developed an interest in Alto Frio because of the very strong interest of Dr. I. E. Gates, his pastor. He was a layman and represented a major ladies shoe manufacturer in Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas. He served as president from 1921 to 1927. A dedicated Christian layman, he knew how to organize and promote. Having the support and encouragement of his own pastor and others, he served and presided over the Encampment during its formative years. He gave much time to Alto Frio work.

Because of this abilities and the respect the folk in general had for him, he was asked to continue serving until the debt incurred in setting up the Encampment had been liquidated. He did that. Among those who led in requesting him to continue serving were: I. E. Gates, S. M. York, Bruce Roberts, Henry Jeffrey, A. B. Mayhew and D. W. Price.

#### **E. P. Kennedy**

Dr. E. P. Kennedy, the third president of Alto Frio, was pastor of the First Baptist Church, Uvalde, and served as president from 1927 to 1932. For many years, he was a Presbyterian minister. However, he, after long study, came to the conclusion that he agreed with Baptists on the matters of baptism and polity. So, at the very peak of his ministry as a Presbyterian, he became a Baptist.

He was a graduate of Princeton University and Princeton Theological Seminary. The seminary conferred the Doctor of

A fellow minister said, in a letter to the author, "Dr. Kennedy was a great preacher and one of the saintliest men I have ever known. He had no ungodly ambition for denominational place or position. His health in later years kept him from becoming very prominent in Baptist work."

A nephew of the first Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, he called President Wilson Uncle Woodrow.

Because of his very splendid educational background, the sort of family into which he was born and his special gifts and abilities, he made a real contribution to the Encampment with his dignity, insight and marvelous Christian spirit. His stable leadership was a Godsend to Alto Frio during the Encampment's early years as well as during the early days of the depression.

### O. S. Lattimore

Offa Shivers Lattimore was born at Marion, Alabama, in 1865. Educated at Baylor University, he was an attorney in Ft. Worth. Elected to the Court of Criminal Appeals, Austin, in 1918, he served that court until his death in 1937.

Active as a teacher, Sunday School superintendent and deacon, he was Chairman, Board of Trustees, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Also, he served as a vice-president of the Southern Baptist Convention and, from 1923 to 1925, as president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

As president of Alto Frio Encampment from 1932 to 1937, he was a wise and gracious leader during the difficult depression years. An able presiding officer, he also was a real friend of the Encampment and its people. He spent his vacations at Alto Frio. He seemed to be something of a "Mr. Alto Frio." Lattimore died in October of 1937 and T. W. Gayer became president. On Alto Frio Sunday of 1938, an afternoon memorial service was held honoring him appropriately.

The following article about Alto Frio appeared in the Encampment Issue of the Messenger of Light, community newspaper for Camp Wood. It was written in 1937 by Justice O.S. Lattimore, the fourth president of the Encampment.

What can I add, for the uplift of beautiful Alto Frio, to what elsewhere appears in this pamphlet? I was charmed beyond expression by the beauty of the Frio Canyon, with its lovely spring-fed river, enclosing mountains, cool nights, hospitable people, irrigated gardens, when I made my first visit to the Encampment more than ten years ago. Those nights under blankets in July! Those early morning squirrel hunts! Those big bass waiting to be caught, that restful feeling of being forty miles from a railroad, where I could cook Dutch oven biscuits and fry game on an open fire. But over all and above all the sweet fellowship of a thousand and more Christian men and women, boys and girls, who, like myself, were so happy to nestle in the circling bend of our lovely river, under giant live oak and cypress trees, "Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife", to worship the Author of our beautiful surroundings; to study methods of putting forward His Kingdom; to hear great men speak and teach; and to come away after ten delightful days rested, inspired -- to be bigger and better sons and daughters of the King. With paved roads, no longer a dream but now a reality, we must prepare for great crowds this summer, so soon to be on us.

Wherever I go, they say - "We are coming."

**ENCAMPMENT PRESIDENTS**

| <b><u>Year/Years</u></b> | <b><u>Name</u></b>     | <b><u>Church Position</u></b>                     | <b><u>Address</u></b>               |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1920-1921                | C. F. Andrews          | Pastor  | FBC, Uvalde                         |
| 1921-1927                | W. T. "Billy" Mitchell | Layman  | San Antonio                         |
| 1927-1932                | E. P. Kennedy          | Pastor  | FBC, Uvalde                         |
| 1932-1938                | O. S. Lattimore        | Layman (Justice,<br>Court of Criminal<br>Appeals) | Austin                              |
| 1938-1940                | T. W. Gayer            | Pastor  | FBC, Uvalde                         |
| 1940-1943                | Don O. Covington       | Pastor  | FBC, Kenedy<br>FBC, Weslaco         |
| 1943-1944                | M. M. Fulmer           | Pastor  | FBC, Uvalde                         |
| 1944-1946                | Hal C. Wingo           | District Missionary                               | San Antonio                         |
| 1946-1949                | Ferman R. Weedon       | Associate District<br>Missionary; Pastor          | Uvalde<br>Baptist Temple,<br>Uvalde |
| 1949-1953                | F. W. Pulliam          | Layman  | Crystal City                        |
| 1953-1957                | Meeler Markham         | Pastor<br>DOM                                     | FBC, Mercedes<br>Harlingen          |
| 1957-1958                | Fred Hughes            | Layman  | San Antonio                         |

*A change was made in the legal and organizational make-up of the encampment. It became a part of the work of District Six.*

| <b><u>Year/Years</u></b> | <b><u>President (Chairman)<br/>Of The Board</u></b> | <b><u>Church Position</u></b> | <b><u>Address</u></b>          |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1959                     | Vernon Elmore                                       | Pastor                        | Baptist Temple,<br>San Antonio |

## Chapter 6

### **PROGRAM PERSONALITIES**

Especially during the first and formative years at Alto Frio, program personalities had great influence. This chapter will include biographical sketches and profiles of the early program personalities. Since it seems impossible to include profiles and biographical sketches of all who appeared on the program over the years, the author has selected, in addition to the early ones, program personalities at random. Also, the reader will find a list of program personalities for the first forty sessions.

It needs to be pointed out that C. F. Andrews, first Program Chairman and first President, perceived the importance of having on the programs the best and most prominent available preachers, Bible teachers, singers and denominational executives. That concept was, of course, shared by some others. The list of program personalities for many years reads much like a Who's Who of Texas and Southern Baptists.

#### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES - PREACHERS**

##### **George W. Truett**

George Washington Truett was born May 6, 1867 near Hayesville, North Carolina. He died of bone cancer on July 7, 1944. He was the seventh child of Charles L. and Mary R.(Kimsey) Truett. He graduated from Hayesville Academy in 1885. The year following, 1886, he was converted and baptized into the fellowship of the Hayesville Baptist Church. He established the Hiawassee Academy in North Georgia and taught and served as principal from 1887 to 1889. There is a bust of Truett in the foyer of Hiawassee High School. Truett, in 1889, followed his parents to Whitewright, TX.

The Whitewright Baptist Church, seeing the remarkable gifts of Truett as a speaker and persuader, wanted to ordain him to the ministry. The idea came from the church, not Truett. After prayer, he acquiesced.

Baylor University had a heavy debt. Someone suggested that the University use him to secure funds for the liquidation of the debt. The person who recommended him said, "All I know is that whatever he asks people do, that they do." He spent from 1891 to 1893 traveling over the state securing funds. The Baylor debt was paid off.

He then entered Baylor as a freshman, graduating in 1897. Pastor of the East Waco Baptist Church at the time of his graduation, he became pastor of the First Baptist Church, Dallas, soon thereafter. He remained pastor of that church until his death in 1944, being pastor for 47 years. The church grew rapidly. The membership and influence of the church multiplied. Truett became well known in a short time because of his spirit and oratorical gifts. He preached the Southern Baptist Convention sermon in 1899 and was elected president of the SBC in 1927. He also served as president of the Baptist World Alliance. For thirty-seven years he was a preacher at the Cowboy Camp Meeting in far west Texas.

When he preached in Alto Frio in 1922, 4,000 people registered. In 1920, 1,500 registered. In 1921, the second session, 1,850 registered. After that third session, the Encampment held a special and permanent place in the hearts and lives of the Baptists in the southwestern part of the state.

Permit me to relate a personal experience. In 1950, I was elected by the Baptist General Convention of Texas to be a member of the Executive Board. In December of that year, I was making my first visit to a regular meeting of the board as a member of it.

I spent the night at a downtown hotel with another board member. We hailed a cab and went to the Sanctuary of First Baptist Church.

Upon telling the cabdriver our destination, he blurted out, "Oh, you're goin' to where our pastor was for so long." It did not take me long to learn that he spoke of Dr. George W. Truett.

That cabby then related the following: One cold day when the north wind was blowin' a gale, I was

headed toward First Baptist Church to pick up a fare. I saw Bro. Truett walkin' toward his church, leanin' into the wind and holdin' onto his hat with one hand and his coat with the other. I pulled to the curb and yelled, "Bro. Truett, get in." He came close to the window and said, "But I have no money." I yelled again, "That makes no difference. I'm goin' that way anyhow. It won't cost me a thin dime." He got into the cab. I found out, on the way to the church, that he had given his overcoat to a bum downtown. The bum had no coat at all and was shakin' with cold. Then, he had given his money to panhandlers who said they were hungry. Yeah, us cabbies looked after him 'cause he looked after us. Yes sir, he was our preacher.

As I understand it Truett never learned to drive a car and likely never owned one.

Truly, George W. Truett gave himself-what he was and what he had-in Christ's name. Because of his eloquence, his truly Christian spirit, and his Christian statesmanship he was a unifying force among all Baptists.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

### I. E. Gates

Dr. Isaac Edgar Gates was born June 26, 1873, in Mart, Texas. He received his early education in the schools there, graduating from high school. He was married to Miss Stella Wood at Battle, Texas, February 26, 1893. Ordained by the Battle Church in 1894, he began preaching and serving as pastor of small churches in that area. At the same time, he began his studies at Baylor University and was graduated with the A. B. degree in 1907. After serving in the state of Arkansas, Gates returned to Texas in 1908 to become pastor of the Ervay Street Baptist Church, Dallas. At the same time, he acted as a financial

secretary or fund raiser to build Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth.

Then, for several years (1910-1915) he served as president of Wayland College, Plainview. The First Baptist Church, Plainview, called him to be pastor. He served in that capacity until 1918, at which time he became pastor of the First Baptist Church, Amarillo.

In 1919, he became pastor of the First Baptist Church, San Antonio, remaining there until 1932. While serving as a preacher, along with Dr. Truett, at Paisano Encampment in 1932 he suffered a stroke. Soon thereafter he retired. He died in 1933, never recovering from the stroke.

He was the first preacher for Alto Frio (1920). He served again as the preacher for the Encampment in 1932. Also, Gates served as Bible teacher for several years. He believed firmly that the Encampment was a splendid spiritual entity. His support of and participation in the affairs of Alto Frio made an incalculable contribution.

The author of two books, he possessed a great and natural sense of humor. Baylor University awarded him the Doctor of Divinity degree in 1921.

### E. C. Routh

Dr. E. C. Routh was one of the preachers for the 1921 session. A distinguished editor and preacher, he served as editor of the Baptist Messenger of the Oklahoma Convention, the Baptist Standard, Baptist General Convention of Texas, and The Commission, journal of the Foreign Mission Board, SBC.

His was a distinguished family. For example: One daughter was the wife of the Superintendent, Public School System, Harlingen, Texas; one a foreign missionary; and a son, Porter Routh, served as Secretary, Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, for more than a generation.

Routh's ministry at Alto Frio was effective. At the Sunday morning hour at which he preached, there was a great response to his appeal.

The author knew Routh and attended several January Bible Studies led by him at First Baptist Church, Harlingen.

### **James Milton Carroll**

Dr. J. M. Carroll, a younger brother of Dr. B. H. Carroll, was born in Arkansas in 1852. Educated at Baylor University, he earned the M. A. degree.

Carroll served as pastor, denominational executive, and college president (OBU and Howard Payne). He wrote A History of Texas Baptist and other books. He delivered at Alto Frio his then-famous lectures on The Trail of Blood, a tracing of Baptist ideas and Baptist-like groups from New Testament times to the twentieth century. The lectures were published posthumously. The lectures and the book helped Baptists understand something of their identity. His influence was strong in southwest Texas.

He was president of San Marcos Academy, established a camp meeting at Montell which lasted from 1907 to 1910 and established a short-lived college at McAllen. Also, he served as Corresponding Secretary (Executive Director), Baptist General Convention of Texas in 1894.

### **Monroe E. Dodd**

Dr. M. E. Dodd was pastor of the First Baptist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana, from 1912 until his retirement in 1950. He served as president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention and also as president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1934 and 1935.

A native of Tennessee, he graduated from Union University, Jackson, Tennessee, and was awarded numerous honorary degrees. He was instrumental in the establishment of New Orleans Baptist Seminary and in the launching of the Cooperative Program. The preacher for the 1921 session of Alto Frio, he is an example of the calibre of ministers who preached during the early years of the Encampment.

**BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILES - PREACHERS****W. A. Criswell**

Dr. Wally Amos Criswell, graduate of Baylor and of Southern Seminary, Th. M. and Ph. D., succeeded Dr. Truett as pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, not long after Truett's death in 1944. He was Alto Frio's preacher for 1948. A gifted man, he used his gifts for the Lord. The impact of his sermons was unusual, for he possessed the ability to transmit emotion as well as a message.

**W. O. Vaught**

Dr. W. O. Vaught, pastor of the Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, was Alto Frio's preacher in 1943, 1944, 1953 and 1954. He had great appeal to youth in his person and in his messages.

**J. Howard Williams**

Dr. J. Howard Williams, at the time president of Southwestern Seminary, was preacher for the 1957 session. He served the Executive Board, Baptist General Convention of Texas, as its Executive Secretary for two periods-- 1931 to 1936 and from 1946 to 1952. An effective preacher as well as an excellent executive, he possessed a fortuitous combination of gifts that enabled him to serve the Lord, Texas Baptists and Southern Baptists in remarkable ways.

**E. D. Head**

Dr. Eldred Douglas Head, President, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, served as preacher at Alto Frio in 1937 and 1938. He had been a professor at Baylor and pastor of the First Baptist Church, Houston, prior to becoming president of the Seminary, following the retirement and death of Lee Rutland Scarborough. A scholarly man who sounded more of Harvard than of Texas, he was none the less a Texan and a remarkably able Bible teacher and preacher. Dr. Head was Bible teacher in 1956 and 1957, teaching great chapters of the Bible and the book of James.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES AND PROFILES Bible Teachers

### J. B. Tidwell

Dr. Josiah Blake Tidwell was the head of the Bible Department, Baylor, and its professor for thirty-six years (1910 - 1946). A true Bible believer, he was the author of several books as well as a greatly loved professor. He was married, had one child and a sixth-grade education when he surrendered to preach. Another child was born soon after he entered Walnut Grove College. He later entered Howard College (Baptist) in Birmingham. Despite burdens and difficulties, he was an excellent student. He earned graduate degrees and had many honorary degrees conferred on him.

In his biography of Tidwell, Robert H. Baker, professor of church history at Southwestern Seminary, tells of finding an amazing statement written on the margin of his Latin book by Tidwell during a time of great stress. The statement: "What I am and what I can do plus God equals Enough."

His first wife died and he married Minnie Lee Hayes, a graduate of Mary Hardin-Baylor. She lived only a few years. Several of Tidwell's children died painful deaths. In 1926 he married a widow, Mrs. Alma W. Lile. Some of his greatness as a Christian and teacher may well have come because of the crucible of stress and sorrow.

A great Christian and Bible teacher, Tidwell was the Bible teacher at Alto Frio from 1931 to 1945. The best known and most loved Bible teacher of his day, he did much to attract people and bring them back to Alto Frio. No one was more biblical or down to earth than Tidwell.

### George C. Humphrey

Dr. George C. Humphrey succeeded Dr. J. B. Tidwell as head of the Bible Department at Baylor. A capable and scholarly man, he was Alto Frio's Bible teacher from 1946 to 1950.

**John W. Cobb**

Dr. John W. Cobb, professor of Bible at the University of Corpus Christi, served Alto Frio as Bible teacher for four years, 1951 through 1954. He was a strong Bible believer, able teacher and down to earth.

**SINGERS -- MUSIC LEADERS****B. B. McKinney**

Baylus Benjamin (Big Brother) McKinney was born in 1886 in Heflin, Louisiana, according to the Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists. In some of his song sessions at Alto Frio, he said, "There is a dispute between two Louisiana towns about which is my birthplace. The two towns are Ringold and Minden. Ringold claims I was born in Minden. Minden argues that I was born in Ringold."

He was educated at Mt. Lebanon Academy, Louisiana College, Southwestern Seminary, and several conservatories, receiving the Bachelor of Music degree from the Siegel-Myers School of Music, Chicago. Oklahoma Baptist University awarded him the Doctor of Music degree.

McKinney possessed unusual ability to get people to sing. He was a genius when it came to composing choruses, gospel songs and hymns. He was Southern Baptists' most prolific composer. He is credited by some with having written in whole or in part, nearly 700 hymns, gospel songs and choruses. In most instances, he is credited with composing both words and music.

He taught music (voice, conducting and composition) at the School of Sacred Music, Southwestern Seminary. He served as the assistant pastor and music director of Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Ft. Worth from 1931 to 1935, at which time he became music editor for the Sunday School Board. When the Department of Church Music was organized in 1941, he became its secretary, a position he held until his untimely death. All during his career he led music for revivals, encampments and conventions.

Tall and large for one born in the nineteenth century, he possessed a pleasant baritone voice. His enthusiastic Christian spirit was contagious and affected individuals and vast throngs. Those who knew him at Alto Frio loved him and were lifted to heights by his spirit, his leading songs such as the "Fire Song" chorus and his familiar statement, "Everybody who won't sing ought to be sent to Sing Sing until he does sing sing"-- Sing Sing being a N. Y. prison.

Just a short time prior to his death in an automobile accident near Bryson City, N. C., in 1952, he stated to the author that he was cutting down on his commitments so as to lead the music for only Falls Creek Assembly (Oklahoma) and for Alto Frio Encampment.

#### Alto Frio Program Personalities

| <u>YEAR</u> | <u>PREACHER</u>                          | <u>SINGER</u>   | <u>BIBLE<br/>TEACHER</u> |
|-------------|--|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1920        | I. E. Gates<br>J. M. Carroll             | A. C. Price     |                          |
| 1921        | E. C. Routh<br>M. E. Dodd<br>I. E. Gates | A. C. Price     |                          |
| 1922        | Geo. W. Truett<br>I. E. Gates            | Virgil Reynolds |                          |
| 1923        | H. M. Virgin                             | Virgil Reynolds |                          |
| 1924        | J. Frank Norris                          | Alva Wilgus     |                          |
| 1925        | James B. Leavell                         | J. B. Reynolds  |                          |
| 1926        | I. E. Gates<br>J. B. Tidwell             | V. M. O'Hair    |                          |
| 1927        | R. L. Powell<br>I. E. Gates              | Will Gordon     |                          |
| 1928        | R. L. Powell<br>I. E. Gates              | S. C. Hubener   |                          |
| 1929        | W. W. Melton<br>R. L. Powell             | Paul Harper     | I. E. Gates              |
| 1930        | W. W. Melton<br>R. L. Powell             | Paul Harper     | I. E. Gates              |
| 1931        | W. W. Melton<br>R. L. Powell             | Paul Harper     | J. B. Tidwell            |
| 1932        | I. E. Gates                              | Paul Harper     | J. B. Tidwell            |

| <u>YEAR</u> | <u>PREACHER</u>                   | <u>SINGER</u>    | <u>BIBLE<br/>TEACHER</u> |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1933        | A. N. Moore<br>C. Roy Angell      | Troy Campbell    | J. B. Tidwell            |
| 1934        | C. Roy Angell<br>T. W. Gayer      | Troy Campbell    | J. B. Tidwell            |
| 1935        | C. Roy Angell                     | Troy Campbell    | J. B. Tidwell            |
| 1936        | C. Roy Angell<br>H. E. Dana       | Troy Campbell    | J. B. Tidwell            |
| 1937        | E. D. Head                        | Troy Campbell    | J. B. Tidwell            |
| 1938        | E. D. Head                        | Troy Campbell    | J. B. Tidwell            |
| 1939        | Porter M. Bailes                  | Ray N. Duckworth | J. B. Tidwell            |
| 1940        | A.D. Foreman,Jr.                  | Joe Trussell     | J. B. Tidwell            |
| 1941        | R. O. Cawker                      | Joe Trussell     | J. B. Tidwell            |
| 1942        | W. R. White                       | Joe Trussell     | J. B. Tidwell            |
| 1943        | W.O. Vaught, Jr.                  | Bob Denny        | J. B. Tidwell            |
| 1944        | W.O. Vaught, Jr.                  | Bob Denny        | J. B. Tidwell            |
| 1945        | W. R. White                       | B. B. McKinney   | J. B. Tidwell            |
| 1946        | W. R. White                       | B. B. McKinney   | Geo. C. Humphrey         |
| 1947        | W. R. White<br>J.W.(Bill)Marshall | B. B. McKinney   | Geo. C. Humphrey         |
| 1948        | W. A. Criswell                    | B. B. McKinney   | Geo. C. Humphrey         |
| 1949        | E. S. James                       | B. B. McKinney   | Geo. C. Humphrey         |
| 1950        | Perry F. Webb                     | B. B. McKinney   | Geo. C. Humphrey         |
| 1951        | Perry F. Webb                     | B. B. McKinney   | John W. Cobb             |
| 1952        | Perry F. Webb                     | B. B. McKinney   | John W. Cobb             |
| 1953        | W.O. Vaught, Jr.                  | Troy Campbell    | John W. Cobb             |
| 1954        | W.O. Vaught, Jr.                  | Tommy Godfrey    | John W. Cobb             |
| 1955        | Warren Walker                     | Steve Heather    | D. D. Tidwell            |
| 1956        | W. D. Wyatt                       | Steve Heather    | E. D. Head               |
| 1957        | J. Howard Williams                | Steve Heather    | E. D. Head               |
| 1958        |                                   |                  |                          |
| 1959        | C. Wade Freeman                   | Tommy Godfrey    | Kyle Yates               |

## Chapter 7

### GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Soon after the first session of Alto Frio in 1920, there developed a general feeling that the Encampment ought to be offered to others that they might share in its blessings and operations. The feeling was that it ought to be offered to associations in southwest Texas. Accordingly, the Del Rio-Uvalde Association, in Annual Meeting in October of 1920 in Del Rio, adopted the following resolutions:

WHEREAS--It is the feeling of this Association that we should extend the opportunities and blessings of the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment to the other Baptist Associations of Southwest Texas, be it therefore resolved:

First, that we extend to any and all Baptist Associations of Southwest Texas a cordial invitation to unite with us in the worthy enterprise of the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment. They may enter in equally with us and others in the privileges, rights, authority and direction of said encampment.

Second, that we constitute thereby, a governing board of the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment to consist of two members of each Association entering into this organization. And that as soon as three associations have appointed said members of the governing board, said members shall meet and organize, and when so organized, the entire control and direction of the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment shall be surrendered to and under the direction of said board.

Third, that a complete financial statement of the present condition of the Encampment be furnished, along with these resolutions, to all interested associations or their duly elected representatives.

The resolution was circulated among the Associations of southwest Texas. The associational representatives provided for in the resolution met and plans for the 1921 session were further considered and developed.

As plans were developed for the 1921 (second) session of Alto Frio, the following developments and improvements are noted:

The Encampment spent more than six thousand dollars in addition to what had been approved.

New buildings were erected by various groups, including a clubhouse constructed by the BYPU of San Antonio, a building costing more than \$3,000.

A light plant was installed and poles and lines erected for the purpose of lighting the grounds.

John H. Davis, original donor, seeing the need, donated an additional twenty acres.

Improvements and additions made gave the Encampment the appearance of permanence.

Plans for the August 12-21 date proceeded. Several weeks prior to the Encampment, a program was mailed. It contained items of interest, pictures of the grounds, pictures of the people attending the first session and a printed program. The first meeting was scheduled to begin at 8:15 P.M. on Friday August 12 and the closing session was scheduled for Sunday evening, August 21. The program for 1920 was informal and was not put into printed form. So, the program printed for 1921 was a first.

The following is the daily schedule for week days:

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 7:00- 7:30 A.M. | Quiet Hour                                   |
| 7:30- 8:30      | - Breakfast                                  |
| 8:00- 9:00      | - BYPU Class Work                            |
| 9:00-10:00 -    | Sunday School Training Work                  |
| 10:00-10:15 -   | Intermission                                 |
| 10:15-11:00 -   | Address                                      |
| 11:00           | Inspirational Address                        |
| 5:30- 6:30 P.M. | Conferences, District<br>Auxiliaries, W.M.U. |
| 7:45- 8:15      | - Song Service                               |
| 8:15-           | - Address or Sermon                          |

For the two Sundays the schedule was:

|             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| 9:45 A.M. - | Sunday School |
| 11:00       | Sermon        |
| 6:00 P.M. - | BYPU          |
| 8:00        | Sermon        |

During the second session of the Encampment, the Southwest Texas B.Y.P.U. Convention and the Southwest Texas Sunday School Convention were organized. Their schedules called for them to meet in a joint session each fall and to have their annual meetings at Alto Frio.

During the early years of Alto Frio, there were baptismal services held at the riverside on the afternoon of the closing Sunday. That practice seems to have begun in 1921. The Baptist Standard gives a report of one held at the close of the morning service in 1921:

On Sunday morning after E. C. Routh had spoken, hundreds made their rededication, and quite a number came forward professing Christ as Savior. Among this latter group was an influential young man of that section. Before the congregation, he said, "I want to go full length for Christ. I want to be baptized today." As he stood at the edge of the

baptismal waters that afternoon, he pled with his old associates to accept Christ. One young woman, wearing an expensive silk dress, made the surrender and walked into the water in her fine clothes and was baptized.

Many of the churches had members present to accept those making professions of faith as candidates for baptism. And, sometimes a person would be accepted into the membership of a church from one of the canyons and would then transfer membership to his home church.

Early in the life of the Encampment, many churches, especially the churches in the canyon country, would dismiss services for Alto Frio Sunday. In fact, that custom was followed by other churches and persisted until after World War II. Yet, it was not until after the 1922 Encampment that many of the skeptics and critics came to the conclusion that Alto Frio was a permanent institution.

Dr. George W. Truett was the speaker for the 1922 (third) session of Alto Frio. The program Committee invited him to be the speaker. However, there was some sort of conflict with the date set by the Program Committee. So, Truett demurred. S. M. York, believing that Truett was the man and that he could make a tremendous impact on the people with his great spirit, matchless pulpit ministry and ability to touch people, asked the Program Committee to permit him to make a trip to Dallas and talk personally with Truett about the matter. The Program Committee gave its blessing to such an effort.

It was winter when York made the trip to Dallas. His conference with Truett was behind a wood stove. After hearing what York had to say about Alto Frio, Truett permitted him to speak to the church about it. York explained to the church his convictions and the importance of Truett's presence. The church removed the conflict and Truett was the preacher.

## Chapter 8

### STABILIZATION

There was no active opposition toward Alto Frio during its first few years. That sort of thing has held true during its entire history. However, there were doubters and skeptics. Too, there were apathy and indifference to be dealt with. Overcoming these was not without difficulty.

Under the leadership of a businessman, Encampment President Billy Mitchell, and a promoter and organizer, Business Manager S. M. York, attendance increased and programs and facilities were enlarged.

The generous financial support of individuals and churches made possible the retirement of debt and enabled Alto Frio to experience growth in attendance and expansion of facilities. Still another factor in the stabilization and growth was enthusiasm, expertise and participation of prominent pastors and denominational leaders. Their contributions were invaluable in the development and expansion of all aspects of the Encampment.

In 1922 bathhouses were constructed, an irrigation system was developed, two new wells were drilled, and an office building constructed. That year was an excellent one financially as \$7,000 was raised to pay indebtedness and to provide additional improvements. Dr. George W. Truett was the preacher, Virgil Reynolds the singer, and I. E. Gates was probably the Bible teacher.

In 1923, transportation problems were faced. H. M. Virgin served as the preacher, Virgil Reynolds as song leader and I. E. Gates as Bible teacher. Gates' interest was such that when he was not involved in preaching and there was not some other person specifically designated to be the Bible teacher, he served in that capacity.

In 1924, transportation was improved. S. M. York arranged for a bus company (probably Painter Bus Lines, Uvalde) to operate a shuttle bus from Sabinal to Alto Frio. The bus company

paid the Encampment \$100 for the privilege. In 1924, John Franklyn Norris delivered a special address the opening day. A free barbecue was provided as an extra attraction. A rather large crowd was there for that first day.

During the period of the middle 20's there were some expansions of service, plans and programs because all these were developed a bit each year. For example, each year a few cabins were enlarged or constructed. Too, tents were replaced. Some years the number of tents was increased through the purchase of new ones.

**ALTO FRIO ENCAMPMENT**  
**Rio Frio, Texas**

March 28, 1925

Dear Friends:

At a meeting of the Southwest Texas Baptist Workers Conference recently held in San Antonio, the "Alto Frio Encampment" was heartily endorsed, and a committee selected to arrange for an offering to be taken in the several churches on May 5th for the purpose of freeing the encampment from its present indebtedness.

Many improvements are needed in order to increase its efficiency, but none will be made until the present obligations are met.

We are asking each church in our territory to make an offering on May 5th and report the results to the treasurer as soon as possible thereafter. We trust that a large amount of cash will be received, however if churches or individuals are not prepared to pay all now, pledges may be obtained which will mature on July 1st. Please forward cash and pledges to Fred S. Hall, Secretary-Treasurer so that a canvass can be made and the results tabulated.

A choice program is being arranged by the committee for the annual meeting which occurs on July 11-20, 1925.

Among the speakers secured are: Dr. J. B. Leavell, Houston; Rev. Hal Buckner, Dallas; Dr. I. E. Gates, San Antonio and Dr. J. C. Hardy, Belton. T. C. Gardner and W. P. Philips are arranging for the B. Y. P. U. and Sunday School work.

The music will be under the direction of Prof. J. V. Reynolds and this will have a prominent place during all the sessions.

Please give this matter your hearty support and earnest endeavor and prompt attention.

Sincerely,  
Fred S. Hall  
Dr. I. E. Gates  
Rev. Calvin Nelson  
The Committee

Editors Note: S. C. Hubener found the above letter in his file. He wrote, "And they say times have changed!"

For the 1925 session, York arranged for the Baptists of Sabinal to transport to Alto Frio those coming by train or bus. He then arranged for Leakey Baptists to transport those folks back to Sabinal when they were ready to leave the Encampment. That plan worked for folk coming and going daily. It illustrates the ingenuity of York to find a way to deal with the problem. Then in 1926 I. E. Gates and J.B. Tidwell were the preachers and V. M. O'Hair directed the music. The author was privileged to conduct O'Hair's funeral service years later. One matter of importance and interest for 1926 was that J. H. Erb, who had been in charge of construction in 1920, fell from the flag pole and died from injuries sustained. Also, for the first time books and Bibles were brought to the Encampment and made available to the people. This enabled the people to secure books that were being taught. It also enabled them to take courses for which they would receive credit from the Sunday School Board.

In 1927, as an encouragement to families desiring to attend, the Encampment announced that a tent and cots would be provided free to families that would use them for three consecutive nights, Sundays excluded.

Preachers for the eighth session were R. L. Powell and I. E. Gates and Will Gordon was the song leader. Billy Mitchell, elected the 1921 session and persuaded to remain in office until

the Encampment was stable and out of debt, felt that he had done what he was committed to do. Accordingly, he declined re-election. Dr. E. P. Kennedy, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Uvalde, was elected to succeed him.

S. M. York, believing that he had accomplished his main tasks in both the work of the association and the Encampment, accepted the call of the First Baptist Church, Alamo.

Thus an era in the history of Alto Frio Baptist Encampment ended.

## Chapter 9

### **DEPRESSION AND WAR YEARS**

With the departure of York and the ending of Mitchell's presidency, a new era in the life of the Encampment began. The Encampment and its officers faced the problems of the depression with resolve and wise adaptations. Then, with determination and yet a willingness to make the most of it, they worked within the restrictions imposed during World War II. Actually, Alto Frio suffered more during the war than during the depression. Though little money was available in the depression era, there were no restrictions on gasoline and tires as was true during the war. During the time of the depression and war, people often shared automobile and truck space, frequently traveling in caravans to care for each other in case of emergency.

Fortunately for the Encampment, the presidents who were elected and served during the depression were very capable, gifted men. Their wise and sacrificial leadership proved adequate for the problems that were faced.

At the 1927 session, Dr. E. P. Kennedy, pastor, First Baptist Church, Uvalde, was elected president. He was from a very distinguished American family (see chapter 5), highly educated and gifted in administration as well as in the pulpit. These traits enabled him to inspire confidence during a trying time. During this period of time the Encampment date was changed so that July 4 would be included in each session.

In 1932 Justice O. S. Lattimore, Court of Criminal Appeals, Austin, was elected president. Lattimore, a remarkably gracious and able presiding officer, brought much to the office of president. He served until his death on Oct. 27, 1937. He spent his vacations in the canyon country. He loved the folk of southwest Texas and that love was mutual. Also, he was wise in whatever he did for the Encampment during the difficult days of the depression. A memorial service for Lattimore was conducted on Sunday July 17, 1938 at 3:00 pm. A large group of people was

present. Dr. T. W. Gayer presided. During the years of the depression and the war there were some changes in the program format. Frequently, at a Sunday afternoon service there was an address by a denominational executive or an address by the president of the Encampment.

One of the most impressive addresses by a Christian statesman ever heard by the author was during a session in the early 1930's.

In 1928 R. L. Powell and I. E. Gates did the preaching while S. C. Hubener, later a long-time secretary of the Encampment, served as director of music. From 1929 through 1931, Dr. W. W. Melton, for 28 years, pastor of the Seventh and James Baptist Church in Waco, was the preacher, Dr. I. E. Gates the Bible teacher, and Paul Harper the song leader. In 1931, Dr. J. B. Tidwell began teaching the Bible class and did so for many, many years. He attracted many people to the Encampment with his great spirit and his remarkable grasp of biblical teachings. In 1932, Dr. I. E. Gates was the preacher. In 1933, 34, 35, and 36, Dr. C. Roy Angell, who followed Gates as pastor of the First Baptist Church, San Antonio, served as preacher. During that time Troy Campbell served as the director of music. Dr. J. B. Tidwell continued as Bible teacher.

Then in 1937 and 38, Dr. E. D. Head, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Houston and later president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, served as the preacher. Again, Troy Campbell served as music director while J. B. Tidwell continued as Bible study teacher. In 1939, Porter M. Bales of Tyler was the preacher and Ray Duckworth the music director. Tidwell continued as Bible teacher.

By 1939, many additions and changes had been made in the officers and their duties. It was felt that the constitution of the Encampment ought to be revised or a new one written. To revise the constitution or write a new one President T. W. Gayer, pastor, First Baptist Church, Uvalde, appointed a committee to report in 1940. Members of that committee were Rev. Don O. Covington, Kenedy; Dr. R. M. Cavness, San Marcos; and Rev. A. J. Carson, Kerrville. They presented at the 1940 session a revised

constitution. It was approved at the Encampment business meeting of July 2.

In 1940, Dr. A. D. Foreman, Jr., First Baptist Church, Amarillo, was the preacher. Joe Trussell, a greatly loved music evangelist, served for three years as the music director. And Tidwell continued his tenure as Bible teacher. In 1941, Dr. R. O. Cawker of the First Baptist Church, Corpus Christi, served as preacher. Dr. W. R. (Billy) White served as the preacher for 1942. In 1943 and 44, Dr. W. O. Vaught, Jr. of Little Rock, Arkansas was the preacher. Bob Denny served those two years as music director while J. B. Tidwell continued as Bible teacher. Then in 1945 Dr. W. R. White again was the Encampment preacher. Dr. B. B. McKinney began a long tenure as music director. He brought much to the Encampment with his marvelous spirit, his genius in writing hymns and choruses, and his ability to get people to sing. J. B. Tidwell served in 1945 for the last time as the Bible teacher.

In 1941, Alto Frio Baptist Encampment was chartered by the state of Texas as a non-profit corporation. The purposes of the Encampment were stated to be for "the support of benevolent, education, and missionary undertakings."

A crisis came in 1943 because of gasoline and tire rationing. There were other problems brought on by the war. There was an official discussion by the board members regarding canceling the session for that year. However, the session was held. Many were blessed, in many ways, because of that.

In 1944, the registration was about 1,200 despite the wartime restrictions. Hal C. Wingo was president. There were many blessings as a result of that Encampment session.

In 1945, the last year of the war, the Encampment had a registration of 1,641, the largest since the beginning years of the Encampment. The Encampment was privileged to have, in addition to the regular program members, Dr. M. T. Rankin, who had just been selected by the Foreign Mission Board as its executive secretary.

Because of state laws regarding camps and encampments, the Encampment faced the matter of providing a sewer system and the proper disposal of waste water. The Clouse brothers of Kerrville were given the contract. The Encampment was to complete the work by the end of the year. While that did not prove possible, what with the shortages experienced in the war, the new water and sewer system was ready for the 1946 session. During that time there was designed and developed a plan for more efficient use of the grounds. A number of cabins had been constructed. Two of the earliest were the York cabin, erected by S. M. York and the Eardley cabin erected by Mrs. A. E. Eardley of Carrizo Springs. The 1945 session was a very good one, for on May 8 of that year the United States had experienced V. E. Day. Not only so, but also, the war in the Pacific seemed to be drawing to a close. These things probably account for the excellent attendance registered that year, but with the passing of the war another era had come to a conclusion. During the post war years people felt freer to move around. They became more mobile because of the easing of war-time restrictions. Attendance was better as will be seen in the record of the years following the war.

## Chapter 10

**POST WAR YEARS**

The first post war year was 1946. There remained some restrictions on gas, tires, and other things but even those restrictions had been made easier and disappeared from time to time. So a great many people decided to begin doing things they had long wanted to do. In 1945 the last year of the war the registration was 1,641. In 1946 it was, 2,520. When the general encampment began, full use of the new water and waste water disposal system made things much easier. With materials available for the first time in years, churches and individuals began building camp houses and dormitories. Yet, in 1946 many tents were still in use. Attendance and registration at the general encampment continued to grow until in 1951 a registration of 3,950 was recorded.

However, immediately following the war there came requests for times to have youth camps and similar things. Some of these were sponsored by the WMUs but others were sponsored by different groups. Gradually they cut into the general encampment attendance but added to the total number of people ministered to during the course of a year.

Examples of the attendance for the various classes in 1946 shows the following: The Training Union enrollment, 1125; music enrollment, 556; Bible study enrollment, 879; WMU classes enrollment, 625; Brotherhood classes enrollment, 85; and Sunday School classes enrollment, 782. The women's classes in the YWA class of the WMU program served as hostesses for tea in honor of Miss Helen McCullough, the missionary teacher and speaker. The time for the tea was 4:00 PM in the big tabernacle with Miss McCullough speaking.

On Friday afternoon at 3:00 the business meeting of the encampment was held. The treasurer's report showed regular receipts for the year to be \$19,951.88. Other receipts, which included money borrowed, brought the total to \$36,528.94.

About \$29,000 had been spent for improvements and for equipment during the year. Most of the costs involved the installation of waste water disposal and water distribution systems.

Reverend Hal C. Wingo served as president. He was the District 6 missionary and a greatly beloved individual. Wingo prior to entering the ministry had been a newspaper editor. He served as pastor prior to becoming the missionary to District 6. One of his daughters became a missionary to Italy. His son, Hal Jr., is now the assistant editor of People Magazine.

Dr. W. R. White was the preacher and B. B. McKinney the singer. The Bible teacher that year was Dr. George C. Humphrey who succeeded Dr. J. B. Tidwell as the head of the Bible department at Baylor University.

New officers elected that year included: President - Ferman R. Weedon of Uvalde; First Vice-President (program) - Reverend C. M. Spalding; Second Vice-President (recreation) - B. W. Mantooth, Crystal City; Secretary - B. C. Brown, Freer; Treasurer - Meeler Markham, Carrizo Springs; Business Manager - J. W. Caldwell, Luling. The Executive Committee was made up of the officers plus the following: Carl Malone of Del Rio; V. S. Marrett, Gonzales; A. V. Stimson, Kenedy; H. Z. Windrow, Hondo.

Dr. William Richardson White (better known as Billy) was a remarkable Christian man. He had the ultimate in higher education, graduating from Howard Payne and Baylor University and earning the Th.M. and Th.D. degrees from Southwestern Seminary. As a tall teenager he graduated from Rusk Academy (Baptist) in Rusk, TX.

Among his pastorates where Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth and First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, OK

He served as president of two Baptist Universities: Hardin-Simmons, Abilene and Baylor, Waco.

Denominational offices held by him where: Executive Secretary, Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1929-1931;

Editorial Secretary Baptist Sunday School Board, SBC, Nashville.

Elective offices he held included president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas in 1943.

He preached the annual sermon at the Baptist General Convention of Texas in 1927 and the annual sermon for the Southern Baptist Convention in 1940.

Physically he stood above six feet and was of splendid appearance. He possessed an excellent speaking voice and could address thousands of people without a public address system though he never yelled or screamed. One young minister observed White had a built in speaker system.

His mind was unusual for its retentiveness and its logic. A splendid speaker, he was also a debater with few if any equals. He served as preacher or Bible teacher for a number of encampments including Paisano and Alto Frio. He was at Alto Frio for 1942, 1945, 1946, and 1947.

The greatest evangelistic service the author ever experienced was at Alto Frio in 1946. White preached a mind-stretching, soul-searching sermon and simply stepped back from the pulpit. Hal C. Wingo, District Missionary and Alto Frio President, along with B. B McKinney directing the music, began the invitation. The invitation lasted more than an hour. There were no appeals or admonitions beyond the initial one. Several hundred decisions were made, many being professions of faith.

After fifty years, the sermon and the response are indelibly etched in the mind of the author. On the occasion of the visit with White at Paisano Encampment, the author told White that he ought to spend his last years writing, for Baptists sorely needed his wisdom and logic, particularly in Bible interpretation and Baptist polity. White wrote the last book that was published by Southern Baptist's on the subject of Baptist Distinctives.

One of the great contributions to the encampment was, of course, the singing of B. B. McKinney. He led many choruses. The "Fire Song" was probably the best loved. He wrote some 600 hymns and gospel songs. They ranged from little choruses to

worship hymns. He was a genius with music. And, with his appearance and his personal qualities, he could get folk to sing as no one else. He had a saying, "Everybody who doesn't sing, ought to go to Sing Sing until he does sing sing"- Sing Sing was the primary prison in New York State. One of the songs which became popular during the 1946 Encampment was "I'd Rather Have Jesus" written by George Beverly Shea.

Pete Towns, a dedicated and multi-skilled layman, was elected to serve as Alto Frio's first full-time resident manager. He did many things for the encampment. For example: there were many tents in use. He constructed frames around the tents so that when the tents were pitched the ropes could be tied to the frames. Anyone who had stumbled over a tent stake or tent rope (and who hadn't?) had real appreciation. Besides, it protected and stabilized the tents.

By 1946 there were not only a book store which provided study course books, Bibles, and books of interest to Bible students but there was also a hospital or dispensary.

### 1947

Program personalities were: Dr. W. R. White, preacher; Dr. J. W. Marshall, preacher during a portion of the encampment; B. B. McKinney, song leader; missionaries Miss Lena Lair, Dr. Charlie Chi of Shanghai, China, and Dr. Manfredi Ronchi, Italy; Dr. George C. Humphrey, Baylor University, Bible teacher; Campfire services Tommie Godfrey; brotherhood speaker and Sunday afternoon speaker Mr. R. G. Letourneau of Longview, manufacturer of dirt moving equipment and a remarkable Christian. The sunrise service on the mountain top had Tommie Godfrey for music leader and Jimmy Allen as the speaker.

As a special feature, Dr. W. R. White, affectionately known as "Billy," led a seminar for preachers. All of the preachers present attended and were greatly blessed.

The president for the encampment was Ferman Weedon; the first vice-president or program chairman, C. M. Spalding; second vice-president or director of recreation, B. W. Mantooth;

treasurer, Meeler Markham; business manager, J. W. Caldwell and secretary, B. C. Brown.

One of the very helpful things in regard to the development of the encampment was the installation of a public address system. Many other things were added including new ranges and other equipment for the kitchen and dining hall.

Because of new policies and lease of lots, many churches and individuals constructed buildings. The Carrizo Springs Church was erecting a tile building with two dormitory wings and kitchen and dining hall in between. Others included a frame building by Calvary Church, San Antonio, a tile building by the Comstock Church, a building by Hal C. Wingo, a building by Mrs. L. C. Gray, an army barracks building by Palm Heights Church, a large framed building by Baptist Temple, a tile building by Del Rio and an army barracks by Uvalde First Church. This enabled the people to attend in greater numbers and they did for the enrollment or registration reached 2,821. Several camps in addition to the general encampment were held on the grounds by churches, associations, and WMU's.

### 1948

Thus the encampment was not only growing in numbers of people ministered to but in finances, in facilities, and in its programs. In 1948, president was Ferman R. Weedon; first vice-president, C. M. Spalding; second vice-president, B. W. Mantooth; business manager, Floyd Harris; and treasurer, Meeler Markham. The preacher for the encampment was Dr. W. A. Criswell, pastor, First Baptist Church, Dallas. He had succeeded Dr. George W. Truett as pastor of that church. He was an effective speaker with a gift for stirring the emotions of people. In 1948, the Encampment had Miss Eula Mae Henderson as a missionary speaker. She served Texas Baptists for more than a generation as executive secretary of the WMU. She was an excellent speaker and possessed a remarkable Christian spirit. That year also, Mrs. Aaron Hancock spoke and sang. She was a woman of remarkable ability in many ways. She and her husband worked among the Indians in Oklahoma. Mrs. Hancock was 3/4

Cherokee and 1/4 Choctaw. Her father was chief of the Cherokee nation and her Indian name, Princess Sallateeska.

### 1949

In 1949, the registration rose to 3,207. Additional facilities were provided, among them being new church dormitories and bits of equipment in the dining hall and in the tabernacle.

Not long prior to the encampment a tornado destroyed the original tabernacle. The new tabernacle had dimensions of 98 x 110 which was several feet larger than the old one. It provided a place for a choir and then was added to later, making it even larger. New buildings by churches included one by the Pleasanton Church, another by Laredo, and one by the Gonzales Church.

The missionary and denominational speakers included: Miss Helen McCullough; Dr. David W. Gardner, editor of the Baptist Standard, and Dr. E. G. Gregory, superintendent of the Mexican Orphan's Home in San Antonio. Some additional speakers included Dr. Carlyle Marney of the First Baptist Church at Austin and Dr. Frank Tripp, secretary for the hospital commission SBC.

Special gifts for the construction of the new tabernacle came from many, many churches.

The full time resident manager was V. W. Tatum.

Officers for 1949 and 1950 to serve through the 1950 encampment were Mr. F. W. Pulliam, Crystal City, president; Rev. J. W. Mason, Weslaco, first vice-president; Rev. Byron Bryant, San Antonio, second vice-president; third vice-president Rev. J. M. Garner of New Braunfels; treasurer, Mr. H. Z. Windrow, Hondo; and secretary S. C. Hubener of San Antonio.

At the business meeting the dining hall was named for Dr. J. B. Tidwell, the men's dormitory for Bruce Roberts and the women's dormitories for Florence Coleman and Ruth Davis who pioneered in WMU work.

For the rest of the summer the following meetings were scheduled. Mexican encampment, July 11 - 16; Lower Grande Valley Young People, July 25-29; District 6 R.A. Camp, August 8-12; District 6 G. A. Camp, August 15-19 and Boysville of Corpus Christi, August 19-31.

In 1949 the attendance at Alto Frio was the largest of any meetings in Texas of Baptists except for the General Convention of Texas.

During those days, the president was president of the corporation and served as chief executive officer. In 1950 the registration rose to 3,666. The preacher for the encampment was Dr. Perry F. Webb, pastor, First Baptist Church, San Antonio. The singer was B. B. McKinney and the Bible teacher Dr. George C. Humphrey. One of the very interesting events was the presence of S. M. York, one of the founders and for the first number of years business manager of the Encampment.

As a new feature for the general encampment there was a youth rally on Sunday afternoon with Howard E. Butt Jr. as the speaker.

A bolt of lightning struck a tree in the tent area and injured four young people, none seriously.

The Sunday School attendance on Sunday morning was 2,018 with a training union attendance of 1,524, both being records. According to the financial report by H. Z. Windrow, treasurer, the cost of running Alto Frio during the year was \$38,721.25. In recreation the activities were expanded to include baseball, volleyball, shuffleboard, horseshoes, croquet, table tennis, a talent show, hobby craft, and swimming lessons.

The encampment hired C. O. Smith to serve as utility and construction man on the grounds. He was to be on the grounds the year around. Smith served for many, many years as the resident manager. He was a man with a wide knowledge of construction, electrical work, concrete work, and such, for he had spent many years in construction and maintenance in the oil fields.

The decisions made during the general encampment were as follows: professions of faith, 24; special service, 16; rededications, 49. Members of other denominations who registered included: 4 Catholics, 9 Disciples, 16 Church of Christ, 76 Methodists, 4 Lutheran, 10 Presbyterian, 7 Episcopalian, 5 Pentecostal and a few Later Day Saints.

### Human Interest.

While I served as treasurer, Mrs. Markham helped me with the counting of the money. There was a great deal of it on Alto Frio Sunday. At about 2:00 or 2:30 the next morning, after we had finished counting, we were walking to our cabin holding hands. The night watchman, obviously not knowing who we were, shined his light on our feet and said, "You shouldn't be out at this hour."

Mrs. Markham laughed and said, "You are talking to the treasurer and his wife." The night watchman laughed. He was a young man, Carl Malone Jr. of Del Rio.

Also, while I was serving as treasurer, J. W. Caldwell, business manager, and I were carrying the funds that were brought in from the coke machines, the evening offerings and the Alto Frio Sunday offering to the bank at Carrizo Springs. When we got out to the south edge of Uvalde we were flagged down. Caldwell didn't know the man so his Adam's apple ran from his chin to his chest a number of times. When I saw how he felt I told him that the man was Mr. Lansford with the highway department. Lansford told us that the Nueces River was up and that we could not cross because there was no bridge then, just a low water crossing. We asked about Batesville and he said, "By the time you could get to the Nueces River it would have that low water crossing covered also". We returned with the \$11,000 or so (a lot of money in 1947 or 1948). We took the money to the First State Bank in Uvalde, for the Alto Frio account had been there many times. Too, the Encampment had secured a number of loans from that bank. I was personally acquainted with the executive vice-president and he instructed the teller to count the money and give us a cashiers check. That relieved J. W. Caldwell and me considerably. We had the checks and paper money in some money bags. We used the two big buckets to carry the metal money. The buckets were so heavy that they caused a fellow to list to one side unless he carried both of them.

Caldwell and I were college mates at Howard Payne. He had worked as a builder and contractor before entering the ministry. I admired him for his business skills. During our days at Howard

Payne, pep rallies before football games were unusual affairs. Six to eight hundred students would gather in Mims auditorium, give pep talks, sing Howard Payne songs and yell. When yells were given, Caldwell's voice could be heard above and through all others. Kenneth Hiner remarked that Caldwell could climb to the top of one of the Ozark mountains and call all of the razorbacks in Arkansas.

## Chapter 11

**THE EARLY FIFTIES****1951**

For Alto Frio the 1950's were a time of change. Changes included special feature programs at the General Encampment, an increase in a number of special camps, the addition of new buildings and equipment and an increase in the number of churches with Alto Frio in their budgets.

Registration for 1951 was 3,950. The decisions were as follows for the General Encampment: 23 professions of faith, 29 for special service, and 89 for rededication.

A part of the report of the resolutions committee, Jessie L. Yelvington chairman, included this statement: "Our continuing appreciation to the Davis family that so generously donated land upon which this Encampment is established; to Rev. S. M. York and Bruce Roberts, whose vision and faith led them to pioneer the movement."

A list of regular gifts from the budgets of the churches indicated that Uvalde First Baptist led with \$901., Carrizo Springs was next with \$630. and Del Rio in third place with \$600. There were a number of other churches that gave very good amounts.

One interesting thing at the 1951 General Encampment was the presence of Popeye, Crystal City's famous statue of that comic creation. The Popeye statue was brought by the Crystal City First Baptist Church group. That city at the time was known as the spinach capital of the world.

The Sunday afternoon youth rally under the Gates Tabernacle at 3 PM had Dick Baker for song leader and Jackie Robinson as the featured speaker. Robinson led his Central High School, Ft. Worth, team to the state championship in high school basketball. Later he led Baylor University to three Southwest Conference championships and was a member of the gold medal basketball team for the 1948 Olympics. Upon completion of his doctoral

studies at Southwestern Seminary, Jackie became pastor of the First Baptist Church of Augusta, Georgia.

The speaker for the Mountaintop Sunrise Service was F. R. Weedon. The attendance for that service was about 500. The General Encampment program featured Perry F. Webb, preacher; B. B. McKinney, song leader; John W. Cobb, Bible teacher; J. D. Riddle, music teacher; Tommie Godfrey, talent show director; Judge Thomas Pitts, brotherhood director and Mrs. W. P. Coleman, WMU director.

New officers included F. W. Pulliam, Crystal City, president; vice-president, J. W. Mason of Crystal City; second vice-president, Carl H. Leeper of Combes; and business manager, J. M. Garner; treasurer, H. Z. Windrow; and secretary, S. C. Hubener.

### 1952

A decrease in the number of registrants in 1952 (3,050) as compared with 1951 (3,950) for the General Encampment was indicative of the increase in popularity of and attendance for the specialized camps for RA's, GA'S, Youth, Hispanics, churches and other groups. The trend enlarged greatly the number of people ministered to by the Encampment.

Improvements in the way of buildings and equipment for 1952 included the apartment dormitory building at the site of the old dining hall. It was designed to provide eight apartments for workers and a dormitory for men. Four new teaching tabernacles were erected. A new water fountain was provided. The water fountain system included a powerful cooling unit and a tank for the storage of cold water. Also a new well was drilled, providing a larger water supply. It was equipped with a much larger pump than was formerly used.

Among the new things secured by resident manager Commodore Smith included one winch truck, one road grader, one fire truck and one tractor.

The General Encampment preacher was Dr. Perry F. Webb. B. B. McKinney was again the music director. Dr. John W. Cobb was the Bible teacher.

There were a number of featured speakers and programs. The Sunday afternoon youth rally was addressed by Bruce McIver and Bob Feather was the music leader for the service. A number of outstanding men appeared on such programs as special guests. One was Dr. Bill Marshall, president of Wayland College. Another was Sam Allen, the first coach of the Wayland Flying Queens who dominated women's college basketball for a number of years. Sammy was a great athlete. He held world records for several years in hurdle events. It might be well to add also that he was a gifted singer.

During the 1952 General Encampment there were several special programs. There was a rally for the 4th of July. The speaker was Congressman Lloyd M. Bentsen. He later served as a Senator from the state of Texas and as this is being written is serving as Secretary of the Treasury. Also on July 4, with program chairman J. W. Mason presiding, the new flagpole was dedicated. A history of the flag was given. B. B. McKinney led the group in singing America and Dr. Foy Valentine of Gonzales gave a brief message of dedication. To The Color was played on the bugle as the flag was raised. Then those present sang The Star Spangled Banner and Bruce Roberts, a founder, offered the dedicatory prayer closing the service. The flagpole was given by the children of D. W. Price of Uvalde, a founder of Alto Frio.

Special denominational speakers included: Brother Dollahite of the Children's Home in Round Rock, Dr. Ellis L. Carnett of Buckner Home, J. M. Lunsford of the new Children's Home out of Beeville and Brother E. J. Gregory of the Mexican Orphans Home in San Antonio.

An outbreak of intestinal flu was experienced. The dispensary was filled to overflowing. Dr. W. P. Meredith was on the grounds to supervise the work. Also, two nurses were kept very busy.

Officers elected included: Mr. F. W. Pulliam, president; first vice-president or program chairman, B. W. Mantooth; second vice-president or vice president for recreation or recreation director, Carl H. Leeper of Combes; and third vice-president or



Mrs. J.H. Davis, wife  
of donor



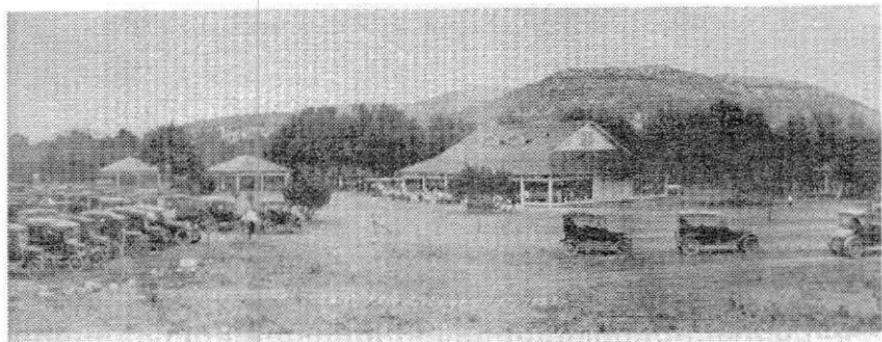
First preacher

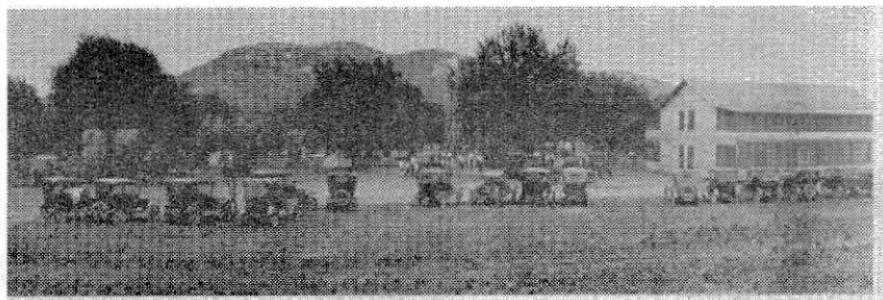


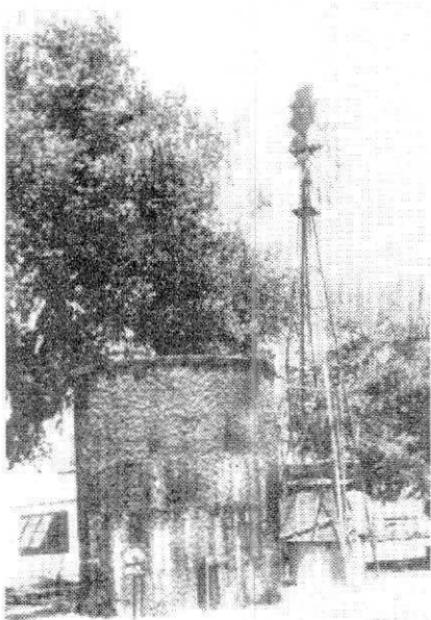
Dr. J.B. Tidwell,  
Bible teacher



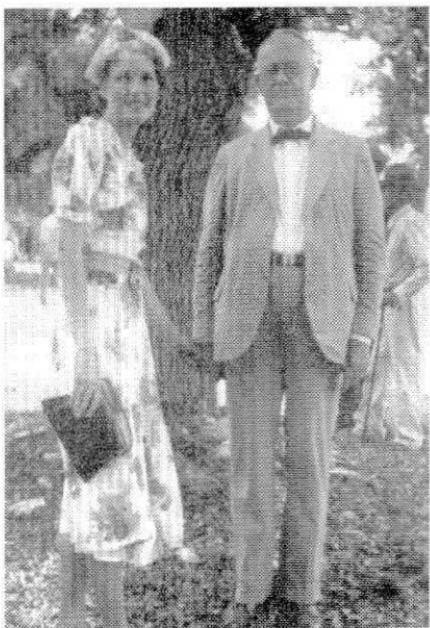
Dr. B.B. McKinney,  
great song leader



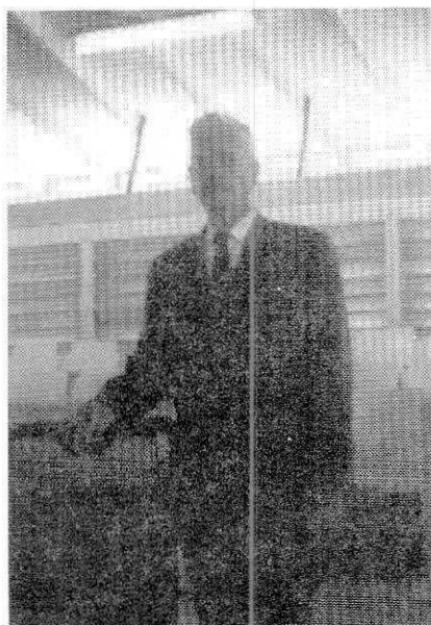




old Windmill



Justice and Mrs. O.E.  
Lattimore



Rev. Claude O'Neal



Tabernacle Scene

business manager, J. M. Garner. Treasurer, H. Z. Windrow and secretary, S. C. Hubener were reelected.

The sunrise service following the mountain climb featured Meeler Markham as speaker. Program personalities included Dr. Perry F. Webb preacher; B. B. McKinney music director; and the registration for 1952 was 3,050 with 17 professions of faith, one for special service and 23 rededications.

### 1953

A memorial service in honor of Dr. B. B. McKinney was held at the main tabernacle on July 4. The preacher for the General Encampment was Dr. W. O. Vaught; the song leader, Troy Campbell; the Bible teacher, Dr. John W. Cobb of the University of Corpus Christi; talent show, Tommie Godfrey; missionary, Mrs. Harley Smith. Her parents were the Bagbys, the first Southern Baptist missionaries in Brazil. Mrs. Smith was born in Brazil and except for attending college and seminary in Texas she spent all of her life in Brazil. In 1953 she was serving as a missionary in the city of Porto Allegre.

At the business meeting the executive committee was authorized to purchase a tract of land across the highway from the Encampment grounds. The tract of 240 acres had a price tag of \$50,000. The executive committee and the executive board were not bound to buy but had an option to do so.

Out of the Alto Frio Encampment in 1953, there were 17 camps altogether according to resident manager C. O. Smith. Those 17 compared with 7 camps in 1952. In 1953 there was a total registration at all camps, including the General Encampment, of 6,817. There were 217 professions of faith, 475 rededications, and 124 special service volunteers.

In an October 1953 report from newly elected president Meeler Markham, there was an appeal for churches to place the Encampment in their budgets. Only 53 churches out of 300 in Districts 5 and 6 had Alto Frio in their budgets. Too, an appeal was made for churches to make the Encampment a part of their church programs. That would include all special camps as well as

the General Encampment. From the October 3, 1953 report on the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment the following is an excerpt:

While the Encampment offers much, Pastors and churches must make these ministries a part of their church programs in order to enjoy the full benefit. Take for example B. W. Mantooth and the First Baptist Church, Junction, which, prior to 1953, had never had a planned trip to Alto Frio for any camp. In 1953 the church planned as a part of its church program the taking of a group to the Encampment. They worked hard making the plans a part of the overall church program. More than 60 attended the whole Encampment session. Among them were 11 boys and girls who were not Christians. By the close of the Encampment all 11 had been saved and all have now been baptized.

Decisions made at the 1953 session of the General Encampment included 22 professions of faith, 99 rededications, and 38 for special service.

Officers elected for the Encampment included president Meeler Markham; first vice-president, B. W. Mantooth; second vice-president, Carl Leeper; business manager, J. M. Garner; treasurer, C. M. Spalding; and secretary, S. C. Hubener.

Program changes were adopted to be effective for the 1954 session. The 1954 session was to begin Monday evening June 28 and close Sunday evening July 4. Adjustments planned were needed in connection with the study courses seminars. Decisions made at the 1953 session included 22 professions of faith, 99 rededications, and 38 for special service.

#### 1954

There was an increase in the attendance at the youth camps, RA camps, and special camps. The total registration for the general session was 2,729. There were 23 professions of faith, 26 for special service, and 64 rededications. Another good example of what was taking place follows: One week before the General Encampment, 550 young people from the Blanco Association

were on the grounds for a youth camp. The results were 21 professions of faith, 30 for special service, and 54 rededications.

Just as the Encampment was opening a hurricane moved up the Rio Grande Valley and rained unbelievably in places near the Rio Grande. Ozona received an official 29 inches of rain. The rainstorm put Ozona and up the Valley of the Rio Grande through severe floods. The flood in Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras reached a deadly level. All cities along the river were affected. 56 bodies were recovered in Peidras Negras and 18 at Ozona. That storm caused some people to have to detour in order to get to the camp.

For the 1954 session Dr. W. O. Vaught, Jr. was the preacher. He had been the preacher in 1943, 1944, and 1953. Born in Versailles, Kentucky, he and his family had moved to Mississippi. He graduated from high school there and then from Mississippi College, the Baptist School of that state. He attended Southern Seminary earning the Master of Theology Degree. His doctors degree was honorary. Following graduation from Southern Seminary he became a BSU secretary for Missouri, a position he held until 1940. Moving to Texas and becoming pastor of the University Baptist Church in Abilene, he then became pastor of Emanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1945. Vaught was very gifted in dealing with youth in the pulpit and out.

Tommie Godfrey was the music director for the general session. He was the son of a Baptist preacher. He became a barber at Carrizo Springs, Texas. He then entered law school earning the LL.B. degree. Following that he attended Southwestern Seminary securing degrees in religious education and in music. A poet, he had also written a number of religious songs. He served during the author's pastorate at Carrizo Springs as the church choir director. Dr. John W. Cobb, the Bible teacher, was the head of the Bible department at the University of Corpus Christi, a Baptist institution. Cobb earned his doctorate at Southwestern Seminary. He was an excellent Bible teacher and delivered a message to the pastors and brotherhood members on

the subject of making the church more democratic. Dr. C. Hereford was the brotherhood speaker.

There were a number of new facilities and some equipment secured for use in 1954. The entrance gate at the north end of the Encampment grounds was dedicated. New equipment for the Encampment itself included a walk-in refrigerator, a meat tenderizer, a deep-freeze, and a power meat saw.

President Markham announced the appointment of several committees. One was to recommend changes in the by-laws of the Encampment: S. C. Hubener, Van Gladen, and Edward N. Garrett. The budget committee consisted of Carl Leeper, Freer; Kenneth Hiner, Corpus Christi; George Stewart, San Antonio; and the treasurer, C. M. Spalding.

One of the very interesting side lights of the 1954 session was that the training union had a goal of 2,000 and it was attained. As a special feature, Miss Netty Lou Crowder of the Convention music department presented special music with the children's choir.

In keeping with the revised constitution the president, Meeler Markham, and attorney Andrew Johnson of Carrizo Springs amended the charter and secured state approval for it.

Among those present during the 1954 General Encampment were Mr. and Mrs. Bob Davis. His father, J. H. Davis, gave the land for Alto Frio in 1920. Bob Davis served on the Committee On Location.

A human interest item: On March 11, 1954 Meeler Markham, president, and M. E. Kirchner, visited Mrs. J. H. Davis widow of the donor of the land for the Encampment. Though confined to her bed her mind was alert. She was living with a daughter in Uvalde. She talked freely about Alto Frio, recalling that she had lived on the Encampment grounds for a short time. She recalled that her husband made a profession of faith during the first session. She never dreamed, she said, that the Encampment would grow as it did.

Mrs. Davis died a few months later on September 4, 1954 at the home of her daughter, Mrs. E. J. Pierce, Leakey. She was survived by three children and a brother.

In 1954, Mrs. Clemmie Graham made a memorial gift honoring H. Z. Windrow, Hondo, who had served several years as treasurer for the Encampment. Windrow, a drug store owner and pharmacist, served graciously and efficiently until his death from a heart attack. The program committee secured the services of Mrs. A. A. Cummins of Uvalde for the WMU program.

Officers for the 1954-55 year included: president - Meeler Markham, first vice-president - H. M. Smith, second vice-president - Elvie Taylor, business manager - J. M. Garner, treasurer - C. M. Spalding, secretary - S. C. Hubener, asst. secretary - Charles Wyatt. In regard to encampment finances, by 1954 the largest source of income was from church budgets. Some of the leading churches included First Baptist Church, Uvalde; First Baptist Church, Carrizo Springs; and First Baptist Church of Del Rio.

The income for the Encampment was in excess of \$13,000 and the expenditures slightly more than \$12,000. The liabilities amounted to about \$17,000.

Decisions made were as follows: professions of faith 23, special service 26, rededication 64. The total registration was 2,729 and Sunday School attendance was in excess of 1,304.

New facilities and equipment included a new swimming hole and the use of a bull dozer to eliminate brush on the ground and to rework the swimming hole.

### 1955

During the 1954 session the date for 1955 was discussed. There was a question in regard to shifting the program date because of Baptist World Alliance. But the date for 1955 was kept at June 28, a Tuesday, through Sunday, July 3. The registration for that session was 2,777. There were 18 professions of faith, 43 dedications, and 14 for special service.

Program personalities for 1955 were Dr. Warren Walker, preacher; Steve Heather, song leader; and Dr. D. D. Tidwell, Bible teacher.

Officers serving in 1954-55 included: president, Meeler Markham; first vice-president, H. M. Smith; second vice-president, Elvie Taylor; business manager, J. M. Garner; treasurer, C. M. Spalding; secretary, S. C. Hubener; and asst. secretary, Charles Wyatt. By 1954 the largest source of basic income for the Encampment was from church budgets. Some of the leading churches in giving included First Baptist Church Uvalde; First Baptist Church, Carrizo Springs; First Baptist Church, Del Rio; and the First Baptist Church, San Antonio.

Each year the tent city at the south end of the Encampment grounds had become smaller. It was discovered in doing research that 3/4ths of the buildings had been erected since 1945. Commodore Smith continued serving as resident manager.

An interesting special event was the recognition of seven women for having served in WMU work for 48 or more years. The oldest had been a member of WMU for 60 years.

Camps during the summer were Lower Rio Grande Youth Camp, July 11-15; District 6 RA Camp, July 18-22; District 6 GA Camp, July 25-29; Mexican General Encampment, August 1-5; Mexican Youth Camp, August 15-19; Graded Choir Camp, August 22-26; and the Brotherhood Camp, August 29 & 30. Also, prior to the 1955 session of the General Encampment there were two youth camps sponsored by the Corpus Christi Association and the Blanco Association. These two youth camps had an enrollment in excess of 1,000.

One interesting sidelight was that Dr. Warren Walker, preacher, recorded a sermon while on the grounds at Alto Frio. The sermon was to be broadcast over a Del Rio radio station on Sunday July 10.

Indicative of the expanding ministry of Alto Frio, the Lower Rio Grande Young People's Camp held July 11-16, 1955, enrolled 611. There were 61 professions of faith and many other decisions. The 611 were served in the new kitchen and dining hall

in 32 minutes. Mrs. C. E. Wyatt was young people's secretary for the association. Rev. C. E. Wyatt served as camp director.

There were committee appointments as follows by Pres. Markham: budget and finance committee, A. C. Mogford, chairman, Crystal City; Billy Bond, Pearsall; Kenneth Hiner, Corpus Christi; C. M. Spalding, San Antonio and Glen Edwards, Edinburgh. A nominating committee was also appointed: B. W. Mantooth, chairman, Junction; Forrest Siler, Uvalde; B. C. Brown, Beeville; Mrs. H. M. Smith, Kerrville and George Stewart, San Antonio. The resolutions committee was as follows: Carl Leeper, chairman, Freer; Hal C. Wingo, San Antonio; Mrs. C. L. Solomon, San Antonio.

In the annual report there was a reflection of advance and enlargement. The registration at the various camps for the season was 6,358. During the encampment season at all of the camps there were 276 professions of faith. That number as compared with all other encampments in Texas was the largest.

In the Alto Frio News there was a paragraph which stated: "For this year, or until we have some experience figures justifying a change, the price of meals will be 55 cents for breakfast and 70 cents for the noon and evening meals."

## Chapter 12

**TIME OF TRANSITION****1956**

The number of churches putting Alto Frio in their budgets was increasing year by year. In 1955-56 several churches gave sizable amounts. Some of the churches were: Carrizo Springs, First Baptist Church, \$600; Del Rio, First Baptist Church, \$650; Uvalde, First Baptist Church, \$600; and First Baptist Church San Antonio, \$500. Thus it could be seen that church budget gifts would become the main resource for the financial support of the Encampment. Also, it may be observed that the General Encampment registration was being eroded by special camps. Of course, the special camps utilized facilities of the Encampment, paid their own way, enlarged the attendance and multiplied the ministries of Alto Frio.

A committee had been previously appointed to investigate the changing of Alto Frio's relationship from an independent entity to identification with a Baptist entity or entities. In this case Districts 5 and 6 were to give consideration to taking Alto Frio as their own entity. Or if only one of them were involved it would be an entity of that particular Baptist group.

The report of the committee was as follows:

Recognizing the historic place of Alto Frio Encampment in Baptist Life and the unifying force of the Encampment which had become a tradition in Southwest Texas;

And further recognizing the purpose of Alto Frio to advance the kingdom through preaching, teaching, and fellowship and that methods have been changed and equipment enlarged from time to time in order to keep pace with progress in the broadening of ministries and opportunities to minister; and further recognizing the fact that in order to secure broader support and enlarge the ministry of the Encampment, there is a need for an identification of Alto Frio with some unit of denominational life, since practically all money is now channelled in this way;

We therefore recommend:

1. That we give serious consideration to the possibility of a closer tie with existing units of denominational life.
2. That we ask Districts 5 & 6 in their next annual meeting to express themselves concerning the possibility of assuming joint ownership of and responsibility for the Encampment.
3. That this committee be continued for another year, that Districts 5 & 6 be asked to authorize committees to work with this one in effecting a transfer, and that the report of the two districts and of the Study Committee be brought back to the annual meeting of Alto Frio in 1957 for final action.

Respectfully submitted, Prentis Chunn, chairman, Kenneth Hiner, Forrest Siler, L. E. Rambo, B. C. Brown, Hal C. Wingo.

The program personalities for 1956 were: Preacher, W. D. Wyatt, pastor First Baptist Church, Albuquerque, New Mexico; Bible teachers, Dr. E. D Head, adults, and Mrs. E. D. Head, young people: song leader was Steve Heather and the missionary Charles Singer of Latvia.

415 attended the Mountaintop Sunrise Service. Jimmy Allen was the speaker. Later, Allen was for a number of years pastor of the First Baptist Church, San Antonio. He served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1978 and 1979. Always, the Mountaintop Sunrise Service was an inspiring experience. That was especially true with speakers such as Jimmy Allen.

Registration for the 1956 General Encampment was 2,524. Some churches had a great many members registered and present. They were Uvalde, First Baptist Church-125; Carrizo Springs, First Baptist Church-87; Harlandale, San Antonio-71; Baptist Temple, San Antonio-70; Trinity, Kerrville-70; Del Rio First Baptist Church-63; Bel Aire Baptist Church, San Antonio-60; First Baptist Church, Leakey-57.

At the Annual Business Session the Encampment voted an expression of appreciation to outgoing Business Manager J. M. Garner and outgoing Secretary S. C. Hubener. Garner had served as business manager for seven years and Hubener had served as secretary for nine years. These men served well and gave of themselves in serving the Encampment.

The Leakey Baptist Church building, purchased earlier in the year, was moved to the Encampment grounds. It was located directly across the main street from the dining hall. The building was moved without damage. Having the church building enabled the Encampment to have groups on the grounds for meetings the year around, for the building could be heated and cooled. Two tabernacles were ready for use. One was the Lamont Wilcox Tabernacle located immediately south of the old Leakey Church building. The C. C. Long Teaching Tabernacle was located immediately north of the old church building.

Charlie Long, bell ringer for many years, died during the year. He loved Alto Frio and kept folk on time for classes and services and the observance of certain periods. A layman, he served the church at Freer as a deacon. A friendly and faithful Christian he will be missed greatly by many. He was honored by having a teaching tabernacle named for him.

Again, there were many camps other than the General Encampment. Always, they increased the number ministered to by the Encampment. Also, they greatly increased the number of decisions for Christ.

### 1957

Open house for the new home for the resident manager was held. A better place for the resident manager to live had been needed for a long time. Attendance for the open house was gratifying. This demonstrated the physical expansion of facilities of the Encampment.

The Baptist Book Store had its own building and brought an increasing number of books and Bibles for sale. Mr. Clary, manager, was often at the Encampment personally.

Program personalities for 1957 were: Dr. J. Howard Williams, President Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, preacher; Bible study leader, Dr. E. D. Head; missionary, Dr. Loyd Corder; and Steve Heather, song leader. Officers who served during the 1957 session were: Meeler Markham, president; J. William Mason, first vice-president; R. C. Tate, second vice-president; H. M. Smith, business manager and C. E. Wyatt, secretary.

Dr. J. Howard Williams, the preacher, was the Executive Secretary for the Baptist General Convention of Texas and then became president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Williams, a remarkable man, told a few of the preachers of an experience he had during World War I while he was serving as a chaplain. He and a Jewish chaplain were occupying the same hospital room. A group came to visit the Rabbi. Looking the two over, and not knowing either, they picked J. Howard Williams to be the Jewish Rabbi. It must have been his Hebrew nose. Williams was a very remarkable man. He had a fortuitous combination of gifts: The ability to dream; the capacity to organize to make his dreams come true; and a gift for effective administration. The author would consider him, because of his fortuitous combination of gifts, to be one of the few geniuses of Southern Baptists. The song leader, Steve Heather, not only had a choir but a 22 piece orchestra also.

Dr. Loyd Corder, the missionary, was with the Home Mission Board. He was in charge of missions and missionaries for the Board. He flew his own plane to Alto Frio, landing on a little strip alongside one of the mountains not far from the Encampment grounds. His Piper Comanche plane had a little brush with a Gulf storm as he came through Louisiana. He was a college mate of the author. His father was pastor at Stockdale and other places in Texas. Interestingly, Corder was born at Lingo, New Mexico, while his father was serving as a pioneer pastor in that state. Corder studied Spanish for 3 years in high school and for 4 years in college, so he was very fluent in the language. Much of the

work that he did even while in college and seminary was among the Spanish-speaking people.

Dr. E. D. Head, who had served as pastor, seminary professor and president of Southwestern Seminary, taught the book of James. His classes were well attended. A gracious, gentle, but brilliant man, he sounded more like a Harvard professor than a Texan. But a Texan he was.

The Sunday schedule for the General Encampment was:

- 9:30 a.m.- Sunday School
- 10:45 a.m.- Morning Worship
- 12:15 p.m.- Dinner
- 6:00 p.m. - Supper
- 6:45 p.m. - Training Union
- 8:00 p.m. - Evening Worship
- 3:00 p.m.- Youth Rally and Memorial Service

Charles F. Bowes, editor of Encampment Echoes, reported on Texas weather. The Texas temperatures reported were: Presidio- $113^{\circ}$ , Dallas- $105^{\circ}$ , Waco- $100^{\circ}$ , San Antonio- $98^{\circ}$ , and Alto Frio a bit cooler than any of them.

Officers elected to serve for the 1958 session beginning their work in office as of Sept. 1, 1957 were: president, Fred Hughes; first vice-president, J. William Mason; second vice-president, Damon Hollingsworth; secretary, Charles Wyatt; business manager, Tommie Godfrey; and treasurer, C. M. Spalding. The date for the 1958 session was set for June 30-July 6. The program committee serving with First Vice-President J. William Mason were: brotherhood-Jack Green; WMU-Mrs. O. Martin; Sunday School-Jack Byrom; training union-G. W. Sansing; and foundersday-Meeler Markham.

Registration for the 1957 session was 2,040. Decisions made were: 26 professions of faith, 19 for special service and 68 rededications.

### 1958

The 1958 General Encampment had as its presiding officer layman Fred Hughes who had been elected at the 1957 General Encampment session. The Encampment as such had its own

program, which was an effective one. The session was well attended.

In its January annual meeting District 6 voted to take the Encampment as an entity of that district.

Attendance figures for the 10 year period ending in 1958 were: total attendance at all camps 60,856 with the number being 6,060 in 1958. Those accepting Christ as Savior-2,386, surrendering for special service-264, for foreign mission service-923, full time Christian service-1,238. An addition to the program was a religious drama class taught by playwright Ramsey Yelvington. Yelvington, the son of Jessie Yelvington, was the author of many plays including the Alamo Play.

The teacher for adult Bible studies was Dr. Kyle M. Yates who did a study of Hosea. The recreational program under R. C. (Bob Cy) Tate included baseball, softball, volleyball, shuffleboard, horseshoes, washers, ping pong and such. Also, there were craft classes in leather, copper, and weaving.

District 5 was beginning the construction of Camp Zephyr on Lake Corpus Christi in 1957 and 1958. Thus it became the responsibility of District 6 to adopt Alto Frio as its entity. The District Convention at its January meeting in 1958 adopted the following resolution:

Your committee on Alto Frio Encampment respectfully submits the following resolution: Resolved that a committee be appointed to form a corporation to be known as Alto Frio Baptist Encampment, upon the following terms and conditions:

1. The purpose of the corporation shall be the support, promotion, and operation of educational, spiritual, religious, and missionary undertaking, which are in harmony with the general program of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and the Southern Baptist Convention as well as District 6 of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. All properties, real, personal, or mixed, which may now be, or which may hereafter be owned by the corporation shall be held by the corporation in trust

for, and be administered for the sole and exclusive benefit under the direction of District 6 of The Baptist General Convention. 2. The official business of the Corporation shall be administered by a Board of Trustees, 27 of which trustees shall be elected by the annual convention of District 6 of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, serving for a term of three years, with one third of such trustees being retired each year, and any or all of such trustees may be removed, with or without cause, at any time, and shall be subject to the general control of said District 6 Baptist Convention. A minimum of two trustees shall be elected from each association. In so far as is practicable at least one third of the trustees shall be laymen. No trustee shall be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms, but may be reelected after having been retired for a minimum of one year. In addition to the 27 elected trustees, the following shall be exofficio members of the Board of Trustees, with full voting privileges: (a) District Mission's Secretary (b) District Sunday School Superintendent (c) District Training Unit Director (d) District WMU President (e) District Brotherhood President (f) District Music Director (g) President of the Convention. It is specifically understood and agreed the this corporation is owned and controlled by District 6 of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, which district is formed of the following named associations, all of which are cooperating with and affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas: Atascosa Baptist Association, Del Rio Baptist Association, Gambro Baptist Association, Gonzalez Baptist Association, Medina River Baptist Association, San Antonio Baptist Association, San Marcos Baptist Association and Winter Garden

Baptist Association. 4. Such corporation shall adopt as its constitution the constitution attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Constitution for Alto Frio Baptist Encampment

Article 1 - Ownership and general rules - Section

A. This project shall be known as Alto Frio Baptist Encampment, a corporation here and after styled "The Encampment." Section B. All property, real , personal, or mixed, owned or hereafter acquired shall be held in trust by the Corporation for the sole and exclusive use and benefit of District 6 of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, hereinafter styled (District 6 Baptist Convention.) It is specifically understood and agreed that this corporation is owned and controlled by District 6 Baptist Convention, which district is formed of the following named association all of which are cooperating with and affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas: Atascosa Baptist Association, Del Rio Uvalde Baptist Association, Gambrell Baptist Association, Gonzalez Baptist Association, Medina River Baptist Association, San Antonio Baptist Association, San Marcos Baptist Association, and Winter Garden Baptist Association.

That was adopted at the 1958 January Convention of District 6. At the General Encampment, the Encampment took similar action at its Business Meeting. Accurately stated, The Alto Frio Baptist Encampment then became an entity of District 6.

At the 1959 session the Encampment belonged to District 6 and was identified as an entity of that Baptist group, so District 6 elected the trustees and officers. In 1959 the officers and the committees of District 6 planned and presented a splendid and attractive program. It was emphasized that Alto Frio was a family encampment. The cover of the printed program shows in red the scenic hill country route to Alto Frio Encampment from San Antonio.

With a change in the status of the Encampment, the officers and trustees elected by District 6 Convention were: Dr. Vernon Elmore, pastor, Baptist Temple Church, San Antonio, was chairman of the trustees; Jessie Yelvington, administrator-business manager; and C. O. Smith, resident engineer. There was the following introductory statement: Alto Frio is the property of District 6 Convention. It is our Encampment, let us pray it shall glorify our Lord by being the best. Please help us make it so.

Inspirational speakers for the Encampment included Dr. C. Wade Freeman, director of evangelism for the Texas Convention; Tom Parish, the vice-president of Wayland College; and John E. Mills a missionary, secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The date for the General Encampment was June 29-July 5, 1959.

Tommie Godfrey was the music director for the Encampment. Mrs. A. A. Cummins of Uvalde was in charge of the WMU. A new activity was listed for 1959. It was a Baptist Ministers Prayer and Bible Retreat scheduled for December 14-17. Dr. E. D. Head was the Bible teacher. This marked the beginning of a year round encampment program of ministries.

Officers for the 1959 session were: Dr. Vernon Elmore, chairman of trustees; Dr. W. P. Meredith of Del Rio, asst. chairman; Mrs. W. P. Coleman of San Antonio, secretary; and Mr. V. S. Marett was the treasurer.

An editorial found the Alto Frio News printed in 1957 follows: The Alto Frio Baptist Encampment has entered upon a new life or a new era of its life. What the shape of this new era will be no one can fully know. However, events of recent years, new demands, new attitudes, and changes in the programs of the churches ministered to by the Encampment all give some indications of direction and shape of things to come.

The youth camps have become, since the war, a very popular movement. This necessitates some changes. Then methods of financing churches and institutions have changed and are changing. It is but

natural that this have some effect on the Encampment and its finances. People no longer really want to "rough it" at encampments. It is inevitable that this have an effect. Then, if we can interpret the general attitude of our people toward camps and encampments, it appears that they are camp minded. What may well be an attitude of the utmost importance as has been demonstrated in several ways. It is an attitude relating to encampments and the identification of encampments with a recognized unit of our Baptist life. Alto Frio is involved in all of these things.

The 1959 session was number 40.

### **Changes in the Status of the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment**

In Uvalde, on June 12, 1920, the Executive Board of the Del Rio Uvalde Baptist Association created Alto Frio. Thus, the Encampment was an entity of the Association.

In 1921, the second session of Alto Frio, about twelve associations were involved having been invited to full involvement including the election of officers and setting of budgets and such. Thus, in 1921 Alto Frio became its own entity. The Encampment officers and trustees were elected by those who attended the General Encampment business meeting during the General Encampment.

Because of the prevalent-at-the-time methodology, service requests and general attitudes in the conventions, as well as the Baptists of southwest Texas, the identification of the Encampment with an officially recognized denominational entity seemed wise.

The churches of Districts 5 and 6 were the primary users and supporters of the Encampment. So those Districts were requested, by a special Alto Frio Committee, to consider taking the Encampment property as property of the two Districts.

Then, District 5 began constructing its own encampment on Lake Corpus Christi. Therefore, at its January, 1958, convention, District 6 voted to take Alto Frio as its own entity. The Encampment, at its 1958 Annual Business Meeting, voted to enter such a relationship. Thus, officially and legally Alto Frio became the property of District 6.

The district, as such, then elected the encampment officers and trustees, planned programs, set policies, adopted budgets and conducted the business affairs to the encampment.

In 1958, the District 6 Convention voted to accept the Encampment as its entity having been determined previously by committee that Districts 5 and 6 would give consideration to having Alto Frio as an entity of the two districts. Conditions within the general work of the Baptist General Convention seemed to make such a move wise. So the trustees and officers were no longer elected by Alto Frio but by District 6. And all business matters were directed by the district.

## Chapter 13

### The Sixties

The 1960's were a time of overall attendance growth. The growth was healthy and indicated something of what was to be. In general the Encampment attendance grew year by year but the General Encampment attendance continued to become smaller.

It was suggested by some that even the figures that were commonly quoted at the time did not reflect the true status. Everyone who came on the grounds for the General Encampment was registered and probably half or more of them were there for just one service or one day.

The 60's began with the Encampment being an entity of District 6 Convention. In 1963 or 1964 the Encampment became a Baptist entity owned by the trustees elected by the cooperating Baptist Associations.

The Encampment received during the decade several cabins as gifts from the individuals and churches who had leased lots and erected buildings. Too, the Encampment bought several others. Problems relating to taxes and the availability of cabins for Encampment use as needed contributed to an effort to have as much space as possible for use in all camps.

Too, there was a swimming pool placed between the large building used for general purposes and the highway. It was an excellent swimming pool in size and design. It also was an excellent one because it had equipment to filter the water being used. The swimming pool augmented the pool in the river. And at times, particularly during a drought, the pool in the river was not as usable as it had been. It would not take care of all who wanted to swim or wade. The pool not only augmented the available swimming water and space but it also provided water that was altogether safe.

C. O. Smith, resident engineer, was hired several years before to care for repairs, building, and managing the Encampment on the ground. The business managers (administrators) became hired individuals instead of elected volunteers. That particular change

came about because no competent and busy pastor or layman could take care of all the things that needed to be done by the Encampment. The business managers or administrators, served as executive officers of the Encampment and were elected or hired by the Board of Trustees.

From the very beginning of the Encampment there was growth which required more and more time for the business manager and the hired individuals for the Encampment. In the beginning S. M. York, business manager, would do a few things during the course of the fall and winter. Then he would secure what help seemed to be needed for the Encampment itself. But by the 1960's with camps all year there had to be the securing of administrators as well as regular help. The dining hall was in use a great deal of the time. That demanded that there be a trained crew of workers.

The securing of cabins or dormitories by the Encampment either as gifts or by purchase enabled the camp to have more space available for those attending the camps of whatever sort. The buildings donated to the Encampment were repaired and in some instances remodeled.

For a number of years during the late 50's and early 60's land across the highway, plus the big old ranch house built on it, was offered to the Encampment for \$50,000. It was a real bargain. The Encampment growth and development caused some to feel that there was a need for much more space. Because of other needs over the change of the ownership of Alto Frio, the purchase was not made.

The Encampment was owned and operated by the District 6 Convention from 1959 through 1963 or 64. Dr. Vernon Elmore, pastor of Baptist Temple, San Antonio, was the president of District 6 convention during these years, chairman of the executive board of Alto Frio and served also as its preacher several times.

The year of 1960 was a good year. Dr. Vernon Yearby was the evening speaker and the morning speaker was Dr. Milton Bradford, president of District 6 and pastor of the First Baptist

Church of Del Rio. At the 1960 Encampment there were several special features.

One of the special features was a fortieth anniversary celebration. The speaker for the reunion was Elmer Graham. He was serving as pastor of the Lovera Avenue Baptist Church of San Antonio. He was present as a youngster at the very first encampment.

Then there were teenage afterglow meetings in the cafeteria at about 10:00 PM following the evening service. Brother Homer Martinez was the speaker and director.

Decisions at the 1960 General Encampment were: receiving Christ as Savior 58, for special service 34.

In July of 1961 a Davis memorial plaque was unveiled at Alto Frio. John M. Davis accompanied his daughter and granddaughter, Mrs. D. D. Hook and Betty, to Alto Frio Tuesday to be present for the unveiling of a bronze plaque in memory of Mr. Davis' father, John H. Davis. Forty-one years before John H. Davis had given the land for the Alto Frio grounds. William D. Moyer, assistant director of the Peace Corps, Washington D. C., was the main speaker for the combined patriotic and memorial service. He was a Texan and a graduate of Southwestern. Later he became well known as an editor and TV personality. The response was given by Arthur Davis, Sabinal, grandson of the donor and the plaque was received by John M. Davis, only surviving son of the donor. Scripture was read from the Bible that belonged to the mother of John H. Davis and had been handed down to her great granddaughter, Mrs. Hook. A Fred Waring arrangement of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" was given by the Encampment choir. The bronze plaque was placed on a natural marker at the entrance to Alto Frio.

During the 1960's there was for several of the General Encampments a very good attendance with over of 2,000 registering. The Encampment cafeteria burned and had to be replaced. The general use building was planned for and the swimming pool was opened.

## 1961

During the 1961 General Encampment there were several features. Dr. Milton Bradford of the First Baptist Church Del Rio preached each morning and Dr. R. G. Lee each evening.

Dr. Lee on one evening preached his very famous sermon "Payday Someday."

In 1961, Kyle M. Yates, pastor in Houston and a teacher at Southern Seminary, earlier as well as later, was the Bible teacher. The beloved Joe Trussell served as the song leader.

In 1961 there were 2,349 registered attenders, 27 professions of faith, and 34 for special service.

In 1962 the Bible teacher was Dr. J. M. Price. He had come to Southwestern Seminary Fort Worth in 1915 to establish the School of Religious Education. He had served as its director for 41 years. Dr. Price attended several schools: Western Kentucky State College, Baylor University, Brown University, and Southern Seminary. A pioneer in the field of religious education, he did much to help Southern Baptists lay plans, provide courses, train professors and many other things in the field of religious education. Preachers for the Encampment in 1963 were Dr. Ralph Langley and Dr. Vernon Elmore, the pastor of Baptist Temple in San Antonio. His doctorate was from Southern Seminary and he was a graduate of William Jewel College, a Baptist school in Liberty, Missouri. Dr. Langley was serving as pastor of Willow Meadows Church in Houston.

Two things of interest in regard to Dr. Langley were: first, he was very active and one of the leaders of the youth revival movement following World War II; and he, while in high school, won the Alabama State Championship in tennis singles.

Then in 1963 the Baptist General Convention of Texas closed its district program ministry and adopted what is called an area program which might be made up of one association or many associations.

Since District 6 thereafter had no official standing it took such action as was necessary for the relationship of the Encampment.

In 1963 The District Convention was dissolved by the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Thus it became necessary for the Encampment to work out the legal status of ownership. Ownership had originally been with the Del Rio Uvalde Association and then up until 1958 was its own entity.

It was determined by the District Convention as it was officially dissolved that the trustees would be elected by the associations involved. These trustees were to assume title to the property and were responsible for the operation. The trustees elected the officers, adopted budgets, and hired the administrator and such other help as might have been needed. This method continues to be the basis of operation for the Encampment. In a sense the Encampment is the entity of the associations for they elect the trustees.

A new constitution was adopted and a charter was amended as necessary. The following is a copy of the recommendations made by its executive board to the 30th annual session of the District 6 Baptist Convention.

I. We recommend to the Convention that District 6 be dissolved upon conditions of fulfillment of the following conditions.

II. Recommendation concerning Alto Frio:

1. That ownership, operation, and control of Alto Frio Baptist Encampment be transferred from District 6 to a new board of trustees organized for the purpose of assuming responsibility for Alto Frio. Initially, the present membership of the district board shall constitute this Alto Frio Board until such time members duly elected by the associations shall be formed into the new board of trustees.

2. That membership of the board of trustees be elected by the several associations whose churches cooperate in the support of Alto Frio. Each association may be entitled to three board members elected annually, at least one of whom must be a layman. The board of trustees may have authority to fill any vacancies on the

board following a reasonable period of time in which the responsible association failed to act in filling the vacancy. The board shall consider itself responsible to the various associations from which its membership comes, and shall submit a regular report of its activities to the associations involved.

That associations cooperating in the program of Alto Frio and the election of the members to the Encampment board of trustees should at least be the seven associations comprising to form the area of District 6, namely: Del Rio Uvalde, Frio River, Gambrell, Gonzalez, Medina River, San Antonio, and San Marcos Baptist Associations, and that any other association desiring to participate in the Alto Frio program should be encouraged to support the Encampment activities and elect its members to the Alto Frio board.

4. That the organization of Alto Frio board be left to the discretion of the board itself and that this board shall have full authority to manage the Encampment program as it may deem wise, including the matters of a financial nature, and the selection of any additional officers or advisors that may be needed for the proper administration of Alto Frio affairs.

5. That the District, Baptist District 6 Baptist Convention continue legally in existence until such time as all transfer procedures involving Alto Frio have been successfully completed.

The system just outlined in the excerpt from the action of the District 6 Convention of Texas has been successful. The Encampment in the period of time subsequent to the change of ownership has been a period of remarkable progress for Alto Frio.

Among the changes was the construction of a swimming pool. Also, other general improvements were made including the erecting and putting into use of a new kitchen and dining hall.

In 1964 the Encampment was held July 3-9. The missionary hour was provided by Rev. Van Gladen, a missionary to Mexico. The missionary hour was in the morning.

The evening evangelistic service was conducted by Dr. Charles Bowles with music under the direction of Dr. Joe Trussell. Dr. Arthur Travis professor at Southwestern Seminary was the Bible teacher.

The decisions through July 9 were: professions of faith 43, rededications 225, surrendering for special service 42.

The churches represented by those registering numbered 146.

A newly elected director for elementary groups was Mrs. L. B. Moss, wife of the pastor of the First Baptist Church, Crystal City. She received her training at Wayland College, Plainview, and Hardin Simmons University, Abilene.

Stephen Heather served as chairman of the board of trustees for Alto Frio. He had served the Encampment as its director of music and in other capacities as well. The attendance registration for the 1964 General Encampment was 1,613.

1965 was the 45th year of the Encampment. That means that it was the 46th Encampment. Brother C. M. Spalding who had served in almost every capacity in the Encampment across the years wrote an editorial:

"Many years ago, this lovely spot on the banks of the beautiful Frio River was selected by a committee of farsighted Baptist preachers and laymen for an annual "Camp meeting" site.

But God was making one of his choice gifts to the Baptists of Texas, Southwest Texas in particular. Since that day more than 100,000 people have been on these grounds; near 1000 people have found Christ as Saviour, 100's have answered his call to special service, 1000's have rededicated their lives. Blessings flow continuously from this gift of God to the people who come year to year. Pray for Alto Frio and give of your means liberally to perpetuate the wonderful program of service

that Alto Frio offers: It is not surpassed anywhere in the land." C. M. Spalding.

The mission speaker for 1965 was Dr. Leobardo Estrada. He was born in Mexico and grew up in Texas. He was educated in the Mexican Baptist Theological Seminary at El Paso; SMU Dallas; and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He served as the pastor of the first Mexican Baptist churches in Alpine, El Paso, Dallas, and Los Angeles. He was serving as director of language ministries in the metropolitan area of New York. He had served 7 years as the speaker for La Hora Bautista which was heard from 50 radio stations in the United States and more than 50 in Central and South America. He is a past president of the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas and a vice-president of the Baptist General Convention of California.

The evening speaker was Bro. Richard Jackson. He was born in Ft. Worth and grew up in Grapevine, Texas. He was 26 years of age and educated in Howard Payne College, Brownwood, and Southwestern Seminary. Bro. Jackson was married and had three children, Don, Doug, and Tina. He was serving as pastor of the First Baptist Church, Sulphur Springs, Texas.

An interesting note is that he moved to Phoenix, Ariz., becoming pastor of the North Phoenix Baptist Church. He stayed there for about 25 years. The work he did was monumental in many ways. During his pastorate, the Phoenix church, for a number of years gave a million dollars or more through the Cooperative Program. It was the author's privilege to be in the Seminary when Bro. Jackson's father was there. We called him Carroll Jackson. His full name, however, was B. H. Carroll Jackson.

Bro. Jessie Yelvington who had served in many capacities at the Encampment, the last being that of business manager or administrator, wrote an editorial for the Encampment Echoes of July 6, 1965. Bro. Yelvington wrote:

"By the goodness of God, we have, in this natural beauty of Alto Frio, the most wonderful location for our Encampment.

By the grace of God's blessings untold blessings have been showered upon us in the forty-five years of our history. Let us pray, work, and give to the end that with the vastly increasing population, Alto Frio may continue to ascend to greater heights of Christian service and inspiration.

The registration for 1965 was 1,455. And while the report is not final there were 33 professions of faith, 44 for special service, and 153 rededications.

The joke making the rounds was: A giraffe is a cow put together by a church committee.

### 1966

Bro. Claude F. O'Neal, the business manager or administrator, listed the following which is very interesting today by way of comparison: breakfast \$.75, lunch \$1.00, supper \$1.00.

The Bible teacher was Bro. Eddie Lieberman. He taught the adults and young people.

Bro. Jack Taylor of the First Baptist Church, Castle Hills, San Antonio was the speaker morning and evening.

The music ministry was by Bro. Fritz Smith. He served as the director for the Encampment and also as director of the graded choirs. The officers for that year were: Stephen Heather president; A. C. Mogford vice-president; secretary Wesley Campbell; business manager and treasurer Claude F. O'Neal.

### 1967

Dr. Jaroy Weber was the morning and evening speaker for 1967. Converted at the age of 8 he felt the call to preach at twelve years of age and became the youngest pastor in Texas at 16. He held the BA, BD, and DD degrees. The Bible teacher, Dr. Eddie Lieberman, grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and attended the school and synagogue. While still a teenager he was in jail in S. Carolina. Someone handed him a New Testament. After 2 1/2 months of reading, he accepted Jesus as his Savior and Messiah. The registration for the 1967 Encampment was 1,648. Decisions were conversions to Christ 34, rededications 134, surrender to God's will 37, surrender to preach 1.

1968

### Improvement and Progress

The new swimming pool is in operation for its first year. For those who want to swim in the river, it is permissible and still lots of fun.

Last week disaster struck when the main cafeteria and kitchen were destroyed by fire. We don't have to climb over old benches and the food remains good. Some new equipment tables, chairs, and trays are in use.

Backing up a number of years there was a campfire service again following the evening service. Rev. Kip Owen of First Church, Pleasonton was the speaker.

Night walks: Dr. Spencer, Pleasonton, and vice-president of the Alto Frio board, has attended for a good many years. He says, "It is not wise to go down by the side of the Frio River at night. Snakes come out in the dark. There are two varieties of snakes: those that crawl and those that walk."

The music director for 1968 General Encampment was Al Wilson who was the director of music for the Castle Hills First Baptist Church, San Antonio.

There were a number of Sunday School leadership conferences. Early in the week the enrollment was 548. Teaching the general officers was Dan McClendon of the Trinity Church, San Antonio. Jim Kirkman taught the adults. Intermediates were taught by Wallace Cobb; juniors by Mrs. W. T. Bump and primaries by Mrs. Jack Taylor. (It was pointed out in the Encampment Echoes that the man primarily responsible for the new swimming pool was Bro. James O. Todd then pastor of the Lackland Baptist Church in San Antonio.)

Decisions through Sunday night were: accepting Christ as Savior 45 and other decisions 54. The enrollment was 1,415.

Potpourri for 1968: The board of trustees met Sat., September 14, 1968. The purpose was to discuss the needs of Alto Frio financially and in regard to property. The planning and development committee presented a recommendation with a report. The building plans called for a new kitchen and dining room to accommodate 550 people. This size allowed the kitchen to feed about 1500 as a maximum.

A further recommendation adopted was in regard to an office for the administrator, such office to be located near the entrance to the camp grounds.

A part of the recommendation for building included a new home for the administrator using the present home for the care taker. That meant that there would be two homes in use. One for the engineer or resident manager and the other for the administrator. Also, adopted was a plan to erect an implement shed for the equipment of the Encampment. Additional plans approved the remodeling and repairing of some of the dormitories, concrete on an area of the river bank at the swimming hole for the campfire or other uses of the area.

The cost of camps for 1960-69 was studied and the committee came with these recommendations. 1. Two days or less \$3.75 per person per day Monday evening through Friday noon. Up to 200 people \$14.00 or \$3.50 per day per person, 251 to 500 \$13.00 or \$3.25 per person, 501 and up \$12.00 for the camp of \$3.00 per day per person charge. Total attendance for the year in all camps was 6,408. Of that number 290 put their trust in Christ as their Savior, 400 rededicated their lives, 40 surrendered to preach, 25 surrendered their lives to be missionaries, and there were 40 other decisions.

The Encampment secured insurance for all who registered. The insurance was without cost to those who registered but those who did not register or were not protected by the insurance coverage.

It should be noted that each year there are many more who attend special camps and fewer who attend the family or General Encampment.

### 1969

The General Encampment date was June 20-July 6, 1969. This was the 49th year and the 50th General Encampment.

Board Officers are listed as follows: chairman, William L Walker, vice-chairman, Dr. John C. Spencer, secretary Homer Stephens, treasurer Harvey W. Hulse, the administrator Paul G. Smith.

The total registration for the General Encampment was 1,429. The 1968 registration was 1,521.

The preacher for 1969 was Jack Taylor. The song leader Bro. Al Wilson. Dr. Kyle Yates was the Bible teacher.

There was a 4th of July men's rally held on Friday, July 4. The rally was under the direction on Mr. Joe Briscoe of Devine. The special guest was Wimpy L Smith, secretary Texas Baptist Men.

### Biographical Sketches

#### Dr. Vernon Yearby

Dr. Vernon Yearby was born in Richmond, Virginia. He studied at Hardin Simmons University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He married his high school sweetheart and the union was blessed with two daughters. Dr. Yearby, at the time he spoke at Alto Frio, was the head of the evangelism department of the Home Mission Board.

#### Rev. Homer Martinez

Rev. Homer Martinez was born in San Antonio. His conversion was in a small Mexican mission that gave children candy for coming to Sunday School. In the mission he attended regularly and preached his first sermon there at the age of 11. He attended high school in San Antonio and Louisville. He graduated from Georgetown College in Kentucky in 1953. He then came back to Texas to finish his studies at Southwestern Seminary. He married his wife (Emily) and they were blessed with three girls and one boy.

**Rev. Jessie L. Yelvington**

The Reverend Jessie L. Yelvington was born in LaVernia, Wilson County, Texas. He became a railway telegraph operator at the age of 15 for the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad. The common name for that railroad was the SAAP. He was called to the ministry and was trained at Baylor University. He served as a chaplain in both World War I and World War II retiring with a rank of Major. He then served for many many years with the Texas State Dept. of Evangelism. It was he who began Baptist Temple as a mission. At the time the Encampment was taken over by District 6 he became the administrator-business manager for Alto Frio.

**Mrs. W. P. Coleman**

Mrs. W. P. Coleman of San Antonio loved Alto Frio. She presented illuminated lectures. Serving as the president of the District 6 WMU she was involved in the programs of Alto Frio, often giving direction to the work of the WMU.

**Dr. Leon Patterson**

Dr. Leon Patterson the committee chairman for Alto Frio was born at Vernon, Texas. He was trained at Baylor (BA) and Southwestern Seminary (BD and ThD).

**Rev. A. D. Norris**

Rev. A. D. Norris was born in Beaver County, Oklahoma; converted at Canadian, Texas; educated at Wayland University, Hardin-Simmons University and Southwestern Seminary.

Brother Norris was a pastor in Kansas City, Missouri; Loving, New Mexico; Weslaco, Texas; and the Travis Baptist Church Corpus Christi. He came to District 6 to serve as missions secretary in October of 1960. He followed Dallas P. Lee who had accepted the work in the State Office with his main work being to coordinate the work of associations.

**Joe Trussell**

Joe Trussell was educated at Howard Payne College and Southwestern Seminary. He was a remarkably effective director of singing. He invested his whole life working with churches as a song leader during revivals. He also directed the music for

conventions, encampments and other general groups. Trussell's most loved song was "His Eye is on the Sparrow." He sang it by request about everywhere he went. In the matter of revivals, he scheduled them according to the time he received the request or invitation. That meant that he was in churches large and small. As long as he lived he sang and he lived well up into his 80's. A man of gracious Christian spirit he was blessed with a gift for music and singing. He used his gifts for Christ.

### **Dr. R. G. Lee**

Dr. R. G. Lee was born in York County, South Carolina in 1886, the 5th child born to sharecropper David Ayers Lee and Sarah Bennett Lee. He was born on November 11 at about 4:00 PM. Soon after his birth, the beloved Negro midwife held the little baby boy in her arms and walked about in the small room. She cried out, "Praise Gawd! Glory be! The good Lord dun sent us a preacher to dis here house." And that was the way that Robert Greene Lee was introduced to planet Earth. The sharecroppers were tenant farmers and most of them lived in undisguised poverty.

The family was a Christian family. They did not work on the Lord's day, Sunday, and strictly observed Christian practices.

Lee's early schooling was sporadic. In his 5th and 6th years he attended a one room school house across the railroad track. For the next year he attended the Flinthill School and had to walk about three miles. However, he did not mind that. His preparatory educational training and background were irregular and inadequate. Nonetheless, R. G. Lee loved to attend school and he took special pride in learning to parse and conjugate. He was always fascinated with words and word meanings.

When it was summer and there was no school and the crops had been laid by, Lee swam a river to see the Catawba Indians. Of course, he learned to be an excellent swimmer because the Indian boys not only competed with him but they instructed him.

Lee was converted and baptized in 1898. Later, he told his daddy and others that he was called to preach. But his father did not want him to waste his time going to school. Being an

obedient son, Lee waited until he was 21 to start to school. He wanted to make some money to get started in school. So he went to Panama to help them dig the Panama Canal and while there contracted a fever. Upon returning from Panama Lee entered Furman. They briefly sent him to a prep school because of his inadequate education. Upon his graduation from Furman he was chosen to give the student oration because he had graduated with the highest grades. While at Furman Lee won the NCAA half-mile run. He said that he would have set a new record that day but somewhere along the way he picked up a match stick on one of his spikes.

Furman University asked him to be a Latin professor. So he went to graduate school and returned as a professor of Latin. Soon he was out preaching and was called in by some authority in the school and told that he could not preach and teach. Dr. Lee said, "God has called me to preach; I will not continue teaching Latin." He later earned the doctorate from the University of Chicago. He was called by some small churches but his fascination with words, his remarkable mind, and his manner of delivery soon had him in some prominent churches. He preached one of the very famous and most listened to sermons ever presented in the English language. The sermon was "Payday Someday." He preached it to his own people once a year and many times to others. When he preached he seemed to exhaust the English language. After retiring from Bellvue Baptist Church Memphis, Tennessee, he preached in many revivals and at encampments. One of those encampments was Alto Frio.

## Chapter 14

**The Pivotal Years****The 1970's**

The 1970 session was the golden anniversary of Alto Frio. A special service was held on July 4. Patriotic songs such as "America the Beautiful" and "America" were sung. There were the presentation of flags and the reciting of pledges. A history of the Encampment was presented, followed by words from the administrator, the Rev. John Heskett. A financial appeal was given by the trustee chairman, Rev. Bill Walters. The memorial service was presided over by Rev. C. M. Spalding, San Antonio.

There follows a copy of the program:

**ALTO FRIOT BAPTIST ENCAMPMENT  
GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY  
July 4, 1970**

**ORDER OF SERVICE:**

Song - "America the Beautiful"

Presentation of Flags and Pledge

Prayer

Song - "America"

Announcements

History -- Rev. H. A. Lee, Gonzales

Words from the Manager - Rev. John Heskett

Financial Appeal - The President, Rev. Bill Walters

Song -- "Faith of Our Fathers"

Receiving of the Offering

The Memorial Service -- Rev. C. M. Spalding, San Antonio

Special Music

Message - Rev. George Stewart, Area Missions Sect., San Antonio

The Invitation to Christian Discipleship

The Prayer of Benediction

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Mr. Bill Young, Pleasanton, is the Minister of Music.

The 1970s of Alto Frio were characterized by several things. First, there was a diligent effort to push up the attendance at the

General Encampment. A strong family emphasis was given to it. There was a continued growth of the number of camp groups who used Alto Frio. There were problems growing out of the matter of individually owned and church owned cabins and dormitories. The Encampment was faced in many instances with difficulty in housing those in attendance at some of the camps. These difficulties were brought on by the fact that the Encampment as such owned and controlled only a small number of such buildings. There was an effort to get some of the churches and individuals to give the Encampment the privilege of using, when needed, their cabins and dormitories.

A number of different things began to take shape. One thing was that some of the churches and individuals gave or sold their buildings to the Encampment. The Encampment began to spend money in remodeling and repairing the buildings for use. The administrator's report for 1971, for example, states that eleven buildings had been given to the camp during the year. In addition, five old shacks that belonged to the Encampment were removed. Five buildings during the year had been purchased and painted for additional dormitory space. With the venting of gas heaters the Encampment provided bed space for 400 in winterized dorms. The Encampment had at the time a dormitory capacity of 850. At the end of the 1971 season for camps the administrator's report of Oct. 1971 shows that there were 6,210 total campers.

The board chairman, Brother Bill Walters of Nixon, introduced Mrs. Bob Davis, the daughter-in-law of John Davis who gave the land for Alto Frio. She had not missed a single opening service in the last 50 years. The Bible teacher for the General Encampment in 1970 was Dr. Harry Lee Spencer. He had received the Th.D. Degree from Southwestern Seminary. His son, physician Dr. John Spencer, Pleasanton, served the Encampment as vice-chairman of the board during that time. Wesley Campbell was treasurer and Lonnie Rollins was secretary pro tem.

The preacher was Brother Sam Tullock. His messages were presented in dramatic form. Each evening he represented some

New Testament person or personality. He represented, for example, Judas Iscariot, Pilate, Paul, and Lazarus. He had been a first baseman for the St. Louis Cardinals.

The administrator's report for Jan. 5 through April 7, 1972 indicate that 24 retreat groups had been cared for during the period of time of the report.

A new kind of camp, the Easter Youth Retreat, had enrolled 425.

Brother John Heskett had come to the Encampment to be the administrator on March 20, 1970. In the 1970's many, without Encampment knowledge, would stay in one of the privately owned cabins. The practice was not always understood. So, the Encampment requested that the cabin owners, under such circumstances, either call, or write, or send a hand written message by those who had made private arrangements for the use of the individually owned cabins.

Brother L. A. Vermillion came as administrator in August, 1972. He served through the 1970's and until 1982. Two of the main sources of historical information for the 70's were the minutes of the meetings of the Alto Frio Trustees and the reports of the administrators. A problem with many, if not most, of the reports of the administrator was that they had no date, or name, or signature.

The legal agreements to be used when an organization or an individual gave property to the Encampment were adopted. A letter of thanks was written to Andrew Johnson, attorney, Carrizo Springs. A date for the General Encampment of 1971 was adopted as follows, June 28 through July 3. Ralph Neighbor was to be the main encampment speaker. Dr. Guy Newman, President, Howard Payne University, was to be the Bible Study leader. The date for the 1972 General Encampment was set for July 3 through July 8, 1972.

A motion to require \$25 for a utility deposit carried. The acting secretary inserted these statements, and then he further said that the last statement is not excathedra. Other action was taken instructing the administrator to have the Encampment record

books and to keep them in his office. That may sound trite but it was quite important.

The January 19, 1971, minutes of the trustees show the meeting was called to order by President James Todd. Interestingly, the new budget adopted amounted to \$92,740. The camp administrator's report included items of interest. He reported having traveled 26,913 miles on camp business during his first 10 months as administrator. He further reported that every week of the 1971 summer season had been booked.

Below are excerpts from a report to the Encampment by Administrator John P. Heskett. The report bears no date. However, knowing that he became administrator in March, 1970, we could place it in the early 1970's. He asks the question about what Alto Frio would be in 25 years from the time of the report. Then he says:

After having been on the Alto Frio Campus for a year, and talking with scores of pastors in the Alto Frio area, I have written the enclosed paper.

The paper is titled, "A Guide to the Development of a Master Plan for the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment."

Those planning a camp must first consider the camp's purpose, its program, and the people. The future of Alto Frio cannot be planned without consideration of her history and tradition; It must be realized that the planning is not starting from scratch. The outline of this master plan has certain headings and they are purpose, types of camp programs, size of camps, and goals.

In the master plan he says that an expenditure of 3/4 of a million dollars would be required to start from scratch and build what Alto Frio already has. He further states that a good foundation has already been laid and that the aim should be to build on that foundation.

There is a very interesting observation that he makes in one of the paragraphs. The observation is: During the 1970 General

Encampment only 569 campers registered for four days or more. Then Heskett indicates that only a few churches, probably 18 or 20 out of the 200 in the Alto Frio area, bring groups of people of all ages to the General Encampment. It might well be observed that the trend which manifested itself in the smaller attendance at the General Encampment continued until the General Encampment as such was abandoned.

Then Heskett observes: "A successful family camp will demand a degree of recreation and programming plus a fresh look at our accommodations."

In 1975 Tom Clawson served as president and Lonnie Rollins as vice-president. The pre-Easter retreat for youth was planned and involved many.

An accurate statement regarding the Encampment, especially during its first years, would be, "We have done so much with so little for so long that many people believe that we can do everything with nothing at all."

During the 1970's there were several new types of camps which have grown and have become very effective ministries. One of these was the Youth Pre-Easter Retreat. Another was an adult camp. Some of the remarkable Texas Baptist leaders had part in these programs.

Then the 1970's was characterized by increased attendance, widening ministry, professional Christian leadership, and an increase in the number of buildings, the quality of buildings, and in funds available.

The minutes of a 1973 trustee meeting reflect something of who, what, and when in the development of the Encampment. Brother James Todd of San Antonio presided. The treasurer's report was presented by Administrator L. A. Vermillion. A resignation, that of Jerry Jones, was accepted. The personnel committee began a study of possible insurance for employees of the camp.

From the administrators report for April 12, 1973 we get the following information. The repair and remodeling of several buildings had been completed and some of the dilapidated

buildings had been removed. The administrator, L. A. Vermillion, had attended the national meeting of Southern Baptist Encampment managers held in Virginia.

James Todd was re-elected the 1974 board chairman by acclamation. Harvey Hulse was elected treasurer by acclamation. Then John Hallum was elected secretary by acclamation. The 1975 minutes of a trustee meeting reflects that Tom Clawson was president. Ken Coffee made a motion that the camp purchase the A. C. Mogford Bldg., the terms for the purchase to be arranged by the finance committee. The motion carried. Tom Clawson indicated that the General Encampment committee continued to work and that the program would be a good one. He stated that the preacher who had at first been scheduled would be changed because he was not available.

A 1976 minute recorded some interesting items. One was that Tom Clawson offered his resignation as board chairman because he was entering the field of evangelism and Bible conference work full time. Lonnie Rollins, vice-president, assumed the responsibilities as president for the remaining part of the year. Construction and remodeling were very common during this period of the 1970's. One of the changes meant the converting of the men's dorm to a motel type facility. This trend has continued.

A 1977 board meeting minute records the presence of Mrs. J. H. Bain of Stockdale. Allyne Smith explained that Mrs. Bain was the daughter of the late Mrs. A. E. Eardley, Carrizo Springs, who donated the museum building.

Lonnie Rollins served not only as the chairman of the board of trustees but also as chairman of the Alto Frio General Encampment program committee. For the 1977 General Encampment the preacher was Joe Walts, Del Rio, and the Bible teacher Jim Puckett. Chairman Lonnie Rollins noted that all of these would be serving without honorarium as had been done the previous year. Later in 1977 the following action was taken in regard to charges for camps: For outside churches or groups, \$35 for a 12 meal camp, \$9 for a three meal retreat, and \$8 for a two meal retreat. For area churches or groups \$26 for a 12 meal

camp, \$7.50 for a three meal retreat, and \$6.50 for a two meal retreat.

The camp calendar for 1979 was approved. The 1979 General Encampment program personnel were: preacher Dr. James Puckett, the music director John McAnelly, the missionary Milton Leach, and the adult Bible teacher Ralph Arms. The budget for 1979 was \$200,000.

There are certain men who served in one way or another at the Alto Frio Encampment during the 70's who deserve mention.

**James Todd**, pastor of the Lackland Baptist Church in San Antonio, who served as president of the board of trustees and as a preacher for the General Encampment, is now retired and lives in the Rio Grande Valley. He was the speaker on the occasion of the dedication in 1983 of the multi-purpose building that is air conditioned and heated for year round use. It contains a sizable auditorium, a stage, a basketball court, a volleyball court, and other features.

It can be said, by way of summary, that the people came, gave, participated, and shared responsibilities so that Alto Frio continued to be a people's encampment. That assured its growth and continued usefulness. The Encampment continued to be owned and operated by trustees or board members elected by the associations of the area. The executives, their associates, and the skilled individuals who served at the Encampment itself made a remarkable contribution to its stability and progress.

Almost every year there was an increase in people ministered to. It might be of interest to say that if one could have foreseen the enormous development of the 80's and 90's it would have been startling indeed. It would have been more startling and surprising for those who initiated the Encampment and who bore the burdens, paid the bills, and provided the programs during the very early days of Alto Frio.

#### **Commodore Smith**

Commodore Smith served for about 20 or 25 years as the resident manager for the Encampment. He was a graduate of A

& M College with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He served in the oil fields for a number of years but came to Alto Frio to give of himself and to provide for the Encampment the knowledge and skills that he had. He retired from the staff of the Encampment. During his time the Encampment grew in many respects and he added his skills to those of other workers and served faithfully and well.

In the 1970's Smith underwent cardiovascular surgery. Dr. Michael DeBakey performed the operation.

#### **L. A. Vermillion**

L. A. Vermillion began his service at Alto Frio in August of 1972. He met with the personnel committee at Pleasanton, Texas. He closed his service March 2, 1982, so he served almost ten years.

Vermillion brought to the Encampment years of experience as an encampment manager or administrator. At the time of his moving, he was the manager of the Assembly or Encampment of the Union Baptist Association (Houston). He had been there for about 13 years. The camp was situated near New Caney along Peach Creek. Bro. Vermillion worked there from the beginning, building the camp from just the bare land.

Prior to that he had been a pastor for a number of years having been licensed in 1934.

Prior to that service at the camp for Harris County he had worked and been the manager at the Lake View Encampment and the JoAnn James Camp near Vernon.

The chief work of Vermillion at Alto Frio was in several areas. One was to work a change in the building policies. Too, another was to reduce the debt. Still another was re-arrange financial methods.

There were about 70 buildings around the Encampment grounds at the time Vermillion moved there. He managed to move or remodel 49 of them.

**ALTO FRIOS BAPTIST ENCAMPMENT**

| <b>Year</b>    | <b>Attendance</b> | <b>Salvation</b> | <b>Rededication</b> | <b>Special Service</b> |
|----------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1968 . . . . . | 6,408             | 290              | 440                 | 105                    |
| 1969 . . . . . | 7,309             | 449              | 524                 | 133                    |
| 1970 . . . . . | 6,190             | 326              | 874                 | 84                     |
| 1971 . . . . . | 6,524             | 385              | 825                 | 285                    |
| 1972 . . . . . | 6,617             | 357              | 786                 | 96                     |
| 1973 . . . . . | 8,042             | 468              | 602                 | 88                     |
| 1974 . . . . . | 8,096             | 391              | 1,083               | 90                     |
| 1975 . . . . . | 8,460             | 470              | 902                 | 131                    |
| 1976 . . . . . | 7,600             | 378              | 725                 | 68                     |
| 1977 . . . . . | 6,806             | 330              | 501                 | 32                     |
| 1978 . . . . . | 7,490             | 348              | 317                 | 28                     |
| 1979 . . . . . | 8,229             | 474              | 515                 | 52                     |
|                | <hr/> 87,771      | <hr/> 4,666      | <hr/> 8,094         | <hr/> 1,192            |
| 12 yr. average | 7,314.25          | 388.8333         | 674.5               | 99.3                   |

**ATTENDANCE AND DECISIONS FOR YEAR**

| <b>SUMMER CAMPS</b>                 | <b>Attendance</b> | <b>Salvation</b> | <b>Rededication</b> | <b>Special Service</b> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Youth Camp (9 Churches) . . . . .   | 542               | 37               | 82                  |                        |
| First Houston . . . . .             | 358               | 20               | 75                  | 2                      |
| Plymouth Park, Irving . . . . .     | 240               | 25               | 54                  | 15                     |
| Girls In Action-Acteens . . . . .   | 365               | 49               | 13                  | 4                      |
| General Encampment . . . . .        | 417               | 3                | 12                  | 2                      |
| San Antonio Youth . . . . .         | 780               | 30               | 25                  | 4                      |
| R. A. Area Camp . . . . .           | 303               | 72               | 21                  | 7                      |
| Alto Frio Area Youth . . . . .      | 480               | 44               | 150                 | 6                      |
| Latin American Youth, 1st . . . . . | 889               | 58               | 167                 | 24                     |
| Latin American Youth, 2nd . . . . . | 1070              | 71               | 165                 | 58                     |
| San Antonio Pre Teen . . . . .      | 207               | 21               |                     |                        |
|                                     | <hr/> —           | <hr/> —          | <hr/> —             | <hr/> —                |
| Totals For Summer 1975 . . . . .    | 5651              | 430              | 764                 | 122                    |
| Total For Retreats . . . . .        | 2809              | 40               | 138                 | 9                      |
| Total For Year 1974-75 . . . . .    | 8490              | 470              | 902                 | 131                    |
| Total For Year 1973-74 . . . . .    | 8096              | 391              | 1090                | 90                     |

## Chapter 15

### Remarkable Growth

The year 1982 marked the end of service, by retirement, of L. A. Vermillion who had come to the Encampment with a wealth of encampment experience. He came in August of 1972 and retired effective March 1, 1982. He was succeeded by Lonnie Rollins. Rollins had served in almost every capacity except that of being a staff member at Alto Frio. He had been related to the Encampment in one way or another for many, many years. He began his tenure on Jan. 1, 1982. That means that he had two months of actual work with Vermillion before assuming full responsibility. Rollins still serves the Encampment as its administrator.

The 1980's were also characterized by the upgrading of facilities and the construction of very excellent new facilities, thus enabling the Encampment to care for its users in better fashion and to care for more. Consistent with this there was an increase in overall ministries. New types of camps were brought into existence. The camps became larger. Some had to be divided. The San Antonio Association had to divide its youth camp, having two dates for the youth instead of one.

Also, the 80's might be characterized by the increase in cost and expenditures.

The total attendance for the encampment year ending August 31, 1983 was 10,466 with 640 professions of faith, 665 rededications, and 62 other decisions. The total number of camps for that encampment year was 12 with the total number of retreats being 111.

The first area WMU workshop was held at Alto Frio. There was a dedication of a new multi-purpose activity building. An area youth camp had an attendance of 900. That was the largest attendance for any camp in a long period of time.

For the 1983 year the reports indicate an income of \$140,036. That sum was an annual record of giving by individuals,

churches, groups, and others. For 1985 the Encampment had a total budget of \$445,000 with a total income of \$523,714.

### 1983

The Multi-Purpose Building which included a gymnasium, a stage, and other facilities was completed. It was a very ambitious undertaking and the cost at the time was considerable. However, the large heated and air-conditioned facility included recreational facilities, first aid facilities, a concession stand, a book store and gift shop, conference rooms, and a worship and Bible study area which could handle several hundred people. The worship and Bible study area doubled as a gymnasium. Since the new Multi-Purpose Building had ample, clean rest rooms and showers, it could be used by swimmers from the nearby pool as well as the many people who would be involved in activities in the building.

The magnificent building was dedicated on July 5, 1983. A special program of dedication was conducted with every seat in the auditorium/gymnasium being filled. Fittingly, a ribbon cutting ceremony was included and Rev. Claude O'Neal did the ribbon cutting. It was not long before his 100th birthday and he had served the Encampment in many capacities. Following the official opening, ribbon cutting, of the multi-purpose building, music was directed by Rick Allen of Uvalde. John Allen, chairman of the trustees, led the opening prayer and introduced all of the trustees present. Historical events in the life of Alto Frio were noted by Lucy B. McCall. The Encampment treasurer introduced Mr. James Bracey of First State Bank of Uvalde, the institution which handled the loans on the building. Bob Wideman, long associated in one way or another with the Encampment, issued the call to praise. The chairman of the building committee, John Kight, introduced L. A. Vermillion, retired administrator, and Jessie Scott. Mrs. John Spencer of Pleasanton who had spent her early years at Medina in the hill country related her family's relationship to the camp and introduced her mother who had been present at the very first Encampment in 1920.

Ernie Wells, retired, of Kerrville led the responsive reading actually dedicating the facility. The dedicatory prayer was led by Bill Perdue, pastor of the Baptist Temple in San Antonio. Lonnie Rollins, Administrator, served as Master of Ceremonies.

It was pointed out that there was an indebtedness of \$270,000 and that an early payment could save as much as \$100,000 if the loan could be repaid in advance of the 15 year pay back schedule.

It was a great occasion for the Encampment. It provided year round facilities for large groups, a facility that the Encampment had long needed.

Among the important and interesting camps that year was one for Hispanic youth from Texas. The camp was coordinated by Bill King of the San Antonio Baptist Assoc. Bernie Moraga, a consultant with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, served as camp pastor, Rudy Hernandez, Jr., directed the music and Bible teaching was done by Jimmy Garcia of San Antonio.

Then there was the San Antonio Mexican Baptist Association Singles Retreat. The camp was to begin early Friday afternoon August 12 and conclude Saturday evening. Adult Director Gloria Tijerina was the coordinator. Then there was the annual Hispanic Baptist Young Married Couples Camp held Thursday, August 18, through Sunday noon, August 21. These camps are but indicative of the missionary outreach and ministry of the Encampment.

The 64th Annual Session of the General Encampment was scheduled to begin on July 4 and to continue through July 8, Monday through Friday. John Hallum served as director for the camp. Tom Clawson served as camp pastor or preacher, having served the previous year as Bible teacher. The music director was Tom Estes. He along with his wife Patty and son Justin, formed the Estes Music Evangelism Association.

#### 1984

An adult camp was held April 9-12 under the direction of Olen Miles. Music was led by Everett Martin. A special guest speaker for the Wednesday evening banquet was Bill Perdue, Sr.

Dr. Woodson Armes served as preacher and Bible teacher while his wife, Sybil Leonard Armes, was the devotional speaker. All of those on program had served in remarkable ways among Texas Baptists and brought inspiration and fellowship to those in attendance. The 1984 General Encampment was called the Alto Frio Family Camp with a theme of Family Enrichment and a date of July 2-6.

The preacher for the family camp was George Schulze, Seguin; the song leader Philip Stevens, Baptist Temple, San Antonio; missionaries John and Lorene Heskett, missionaries to the Dominican Republic, he being a former administrator for Alto Frio and the adult Bible study leader Ralph Armes.

The camp was planned programwise and otherwise to care for every member of the family.

Mrs. Grace Palmer of Cleveland, Texas, became the new cafeteria manager on May 4. She brought with her much experience in caring for the preparation for meals in camps. During the winter months she served as a high school teacher. She had served the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention as a missionary in Nigeria.

A critical situation developed when the water pumps would cut off for no apparent reason. As demand increased the reason was discovered. The underground water level had dropped to the point that the pumps were no longer submerged in water. A new well was drilled and provided water though on a limited basis.

On Tuesday, July 3 of 1984 a time capsule was filled with various items of interest and then sealed. The time capsule which contained many items of interest and importance will be reopened on Tue., July 4, in the year 2000. That will be the 80th anniversary of the Encampment.

The annual report for the Encampment year 1984: Total attendance 10,022, professions of faith 507, rededications 410, other decisions 73, total camps 14, and total retreats 113.

## 1985

A long time friend of Alto Frio who had served as an elected officer a number of times, Dr. John C. Spencer, MD., suffered a heart attack and died. His father Dr. Harry Lee Spencer, Sr. had served the Encampment as its preacher and Bible teacher.

A January Bible Study Clinic was held adding to the broadening ministry of the Encampment.

Damon Ferguson was elected Maintainence Director for the Encampment, having served as supervisor of maintenance at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

An Alto Frio long range planning committee was elected. The committee held its first meeting on Jan. 31, 1985, at which time the group was organized into a working team. Rev. Robert Schmeltekopf, Executive Director of the San Antonio Baptist Association, agreed to serve as president. There had been for some time a feeling that a long range planning committee was needed because of changing personnel needs, changing camp types, and changing numbers, usually upward, of the camps and retreats scheduled.

The budget adopted for 1985 amounted to \$445,000. The Encampment was informed that Edgar Allen Williams of San Antonio had died leaving a will which included funds to Alto Frio Encampment.

The plans for the family camp or the General Encampment announced its program. Don Jopling, Ft. Worth, was scheduled to be the preacher, with music furnished by Tom and Patty Estes. The camp missionary was Sharron Hawk, a furloughing missionary to Nigeria.

A special feature for Thursday evening, July 4, was announced. "Reflection," an eight member ensemble from Azusa Pacific University, presented contemporary sacred music and appropriate patriotic songs.

The Lost Maples Bible Conference continued to grow. It had been scheduled a few years prior to 1985. It was called Lost Maples because not far from Alto Frio is Lost Maples State Natural Area located near Vanderpool. The maple trees there

are breathtakingly beautiful. Bible lectures were scheduled to be presented by Dr. Elwin Skiles, president emeritus of Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene.

In an article in a 1985 issue of The Alto Frio Encampment News about the 1921 Encampment Lonnie H. Webb stated that a group of young people from Utopia camped in tents upon the ground. Bro. and Mrs. Bruce Roberts, pastor and wife, of the church sponsored the group. They did all their cooking on an open fire. Also, most of them moved cots in and out of tents at night to sleep under the stars. The sermon on Thursday night of that week was titled World Need and presented by M. E. Dodd, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana. Webb indicated that he responded to the invitation feeling that God wanted him to preach. For five years he had been rebelling against God's will, he said, and now he was willing to go anywhere. Webb also said that standing in the line near him was a young woman, Doris Finney. Doris Finney was the daughter of L. E. Finney, one of the speakers at the first Encampment. Doris Finney married Dr. Tom Edwards. They had two sons, Tom Jr. and Robert. Robert made a decision early in life to be a missionary. He serves as a medical missionary to Colombia. It was the author's privilege to be pastor of the Edward's family for several years.

Late during the year of 1985 a Bible study camp was planned for persons who would be teaching the Jan. Bible Study in 1986. That plan was for Monday and Tuesday, December 1 & 2, 1985. The teacher of the Bible Study was Dr. Randall Bush, Professor of New Testament and Vice-president for student affairs, Howard Payne University.

The long range committee presented an 86 page report. The project included five sections: 1. remembering our roots; 2. appraising our present; 3. defining our dreams; 4. setting our goals; 5. starting toward our future. Much good came of the work of the committee.

The budget for 1986 was presented. The total budget was \$498,939.

It was announced that Dr. Woodson Armes would return to serve as the Bible teacher for the Lost Maples Bible Conference. The Armes were both well known and greatly loved.

Fifteen camp dates were listed for 1986.

In a column "Lines From Lonnie," the idea of making camp attendance a part of the program of the church was presented. That concept has great merit. The author can testify as to what attendance at an encampment will do for the spiritual life of a church.

It was announced that Alto Frio would be hosting two camps during April for senior adults. The first, the traditional Alto Frio Adult Camp, was scheduled for April 14-17. The week following, April 21-24, the Tryon-Evergreen Association was to conduct its senior adult retreat at Alto Frio.

The annual youth retreat at Alto Frio, called the Pre-Easter Retreat, was set for March 27-29. Evangelist Knox Talbert, youth evangelism director for the Baptist General Convention, was the preacher. Jeff Lynn, a concert and recording artist, was the singer. The General Encampment or Family Camp was scheduled for June 30-July 4 with John Hallum as preacher, Ruben Canas singer, and missionaries Pat and Patty Patterson. The new youth camp was planned to be held at the same time as the General Encampment, with the entire program for the youth to be modeled after Centrifuge held at Glorieta. The camp pastor was Don Higginbotham, First Baptist Church, Pleasanton. The theme was scheduled to be Survival of the Saints. In the July/August issue of Alto Frio Baptist Encampment News there was a picture of Pete Towns a retiree living in Kerrville, shown spraying a coat of paint on the building. Pete was the first full time resident manager of the Encampment. Two women-only retreats were held during the year.

The Lost Maples Bible Conference was planned at a time to take advantage of the beauty of that area and especially of the Lost Maples Natural Area which was only twenty miles away.

Dr. W. E. Thorn was the preacher for the second Lost Maples Bible Conference. He is a minister, lecturer, author,

educator, and after dinner speaker deluxe. The son of a very prominent minister, Dr. Floyd B. Thorn, he was educated at Hardin-Simmons University and Southwestern Seminary. His sense of humor is unmatched. The devotional leader for the Lost Maples Bible Conference was Alton Patton.

### 1987

Eighteen camps were scheduled for 1987. There were many features including a hand bell clinic to be directed by a renowned hand bell authority. The good news regarding cabins received as gifts from people in churches was of great interest. Many of the cabins had been owned by individuals, families, and churches for many years. Some of those were removed and others were remodeled. Those giving the property or the cabins and dormitories to the Encampment included: Mrs. Mary Jo Thompson, Mr. & Mrs. Addison Reed, Mr. & Mrs. Jesse DeSha, Mrs. Betty Walker, Mr. & Mrs. Marion Webber, Lloyd D. Cook, Mr. & Mrs. W. P. Coleman, Mrs. E. P. Lawrence, Mrs. Sarah Spencer, the late C. M. Spalding, Comstock Church, the Harlandale Baptist Church, and the Stockdale Baptist Church. This trend continued until at this writing all of the buildings on the Encampment grounds are owned by the Encampment. Many of them have been remodeled. A ground breaking ceremony was held on February 17 marking the beginning of construction of a new conference center.

During the year the first units of the new conference center were completed. Program personalities for the Lost Maples Bible Conference were announced: Dr. Nat C. Bettis of Waco, Bible teacher; devotional leader, Ralph Reasor; music director, Dr. Euell Porter of Baylor University. Later, because of illness, Dr. Porter had to have a replacement. The replacement was Lowell Rollins, director of music in Port Arthur. In the minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees in 1985 some reports were adopted or motions approved changing the fiscal policy. The change involved two or three matters: 1. to require two signatures on each check, one trustee and one staff member; 2. signatures were authorized - Stevens, Woodward, Rollins, and

Helen Hutto; 3. to declare the financial books of Alto Frio to be closed Jan. 1 and that an annual audit, either internal or external, be required.

Another motion approved was that the liability insurance be increased to at least \$1,000,000. In the Nov. 17, 1987 meeting of the Board of Trustees the following officers were elected: James Carey, president; Don Higginbotham, vice-president; secretary, Bill Sluder; Homer Stevens, treasurer; asst. treasurer, Medford Keeth.

Also, there was a discussion regarding the completion of the Rio Frio Conference Center. The final decision was made to complete the second phase and then re-evaluate the situation. The second phase was to be a conference room with a seating capacity of 150 and the necessary related equipment to conduct conferences and seminars. There would also be a small kitchen, bathrooms, and a fireplace.

The annual report for 1987 reflected an attendance of 10,727. The program year for Alto Frio is Oct. 1 - Sep. 30. The fiscal year is from Jan. 1 - Dec. 31.

In 1988 a major event was the completion of the Rio Frio Retreat Center Conference Building. The Conference Center would provide adequately for adult conference meetings without having to use the major buildings on the grounds.

For the Easter Youth Retreat, or Pre-Easter Youth Retreat as some called it, Tierce Green was to be the speaker. John Coleman was to serve as director and chairman.

For the Alto Frio Area Wide Youth Camp scheduled for 1988 Billy Beacham, Ft. Worth, President of Student Disciple Ministries in Ft. Worth, was the evening speaker. Another special feature was that David Crane provided a special Wednesday evening concert. Also, of real importance was the fact that the recreation coordinators put together a program rivalling that of Centrifuge and Super Summer with awards for participants at the end of the week. The camp was held July 11-15.

Another first for the Encampment was the scheduling of a church basketball tournament to be held Friday and Saturday, April 29 & 30. The tournament was held in the very fine gymnasium/auditorium for the Alto Frio Encampment.

The Adult Camp schedule Monday through Thursday, April 11-14 was to have Dr. James H. Landes to serve as camp pastor. Landes was the Executive Director of Texas Baptist from 1974 until 1982. At the time of the Adult Camp Dr. Landes was serving as Distinguished Professor of Religion at Baylor University.

W. E. Thorn served as the devotional leader for the camp.

The General Encampment changed its format. The camp was basically for adults. However, older children grades 4-6 were scheduled to attend the Alto Frio Children's Camp which ran concurrently. Program personalities for the General Encampment included Dr. Claude Jacks Jr., preacher; music director, Henry Talbot of San Antonio; Bible teacher, Ted Miles; and missionary Ona Jones, missionary to Zimbabwe, Africa.

The Conference Center of the Encampment was completed. The Conference Center included 32 all new private motel-type rooms, the meeting room with a seating capacity of 100 to 150 persons, a small kitchen, bathrooms, and furnishings. Each private room has two queen sized beds and is air conditioned, as is the conference room. The cost of the Center was \$480,000. At its May 17, 1988 meeting the Board officially named the Conference Center the Rio Frio Conference Center.

The May/June addition of Alto Frio Baptist Encampment News included an article titled "Reflections of Alto Frio" by Joyce E. Moore.

She stated, "I remember little of my first journey to Alto Frio in 1922 except the excitement of driving across the Frio River in the water about ten times after leaving Sabinal. My mother was driving an open Buick and stopped frequently to ask passers by, 'Is this the way to Leakey?'

We camped under the trees for many many years until Mother built her small cabin. She rarely missed an Encampment. I remember at first she would be invited by the Davises (who gave the encampment ground) to share a Sunday dinner on the ground with people from the area.

I remember when the WMU ladies from Sabinal prepared meals for the campers. To a child the best features besides good home cooking were the jars of jelly and the preserves on the table. Mother encouraged our Nixon Baptist Church to build a large building which included her small camp house. For many years she sponsored groups of young people to attend Alto Frio not only providing travel but also seeing that the meals were always of the best."

Mrs. Moore's mother was Mrs. Katie Elder. Moore also mentions knowing Dr. J. B. Tidwell, Judge O. S. Latimore, and others of the early officers and program personalities.

There was a rather serious problem relating to the banks just under the Rio Frio Conference Center and along the old swimming hole. Money was spent to reinforce the wall there so that water during floods would not continue to damage the banks of the river.

Sat., Sep. 24, 1988, was a special day for the Encampment. On that day the Rio Frio Conference Center was dedicated at a special service beginning at 2:00 PM. The completion and dedication of the conference center was the fulfillment of a dream.

As a part of the effort to present to churches and individuals the ministries of Alto Frio, a plan was adopted to make a professional 15 min. color video program about Alto Frio. Churches with video equipment were encouraged to order a copy and to show it to various groups.

Ministries to Hispanic groups were expanded and the attendance grew year by year.

The Lost Maples Bible Conference was held Nov. 7-10 with Dr. John McBain serving as Bible teacher, Alan Benson as the director of music.

The total attendance at Alto Frio in 1988 was 10,904 with 374 professions of faith and 537 rededications.

The devotional leader for the Lost Maples Bible Conference was Dr. H. B. Ramsour. Ramsour served as president of the Hispanic Baptist Theological Seminary in San Antonio from 1960 to 1976. He served for 31 years as a missionary of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Japan, Argentina, and Hawaii.

At the meeting of the Trustees in the late fall of 1988 the following officers were elected: president, James Carey; vice-president, Don Higginbothem; secretary, Ted Bosworth; treasurer, Homer Stevens; asst. treasurer, Medford Keeth.

The R. V. Park, recreational vehicle park, was becoming so popular that 75 full hookups were provided. Very often all of them were in use.

The 1989 report which covered the time period of Oct. 1, 1988 - Sep. 30, 1989 showed the following: total attendance, 13,887; professions of faith, 503; rededications, 956; other decisions, 75; total camps, 23; total retreats, 240. A financial report showed that income in the amount of \$697,101 was received with the annual budget requirements being \$680,150. Particularly during the decade the main source of funds for the Encampment operations came from camp fees charged to persons who used the facility. However, it should be noted that the church, associational and individual gifts did help in a very significant manner to keep camp fees lower.

Campers on Mission state president E. L. (Corky) McMillan and coordinators Charles Carpenter and Doyel Hammond, along with chairman Richard Fergus and John White, Alto Frio's maintenance supervisor, built 190 beds. The beds were designed to be safe and strong. The group also refurbished a dormitory containing 72 beds. The crew painted a number of additional buildings. This sort of work has saved the Encampment

considerable funds. Too, since those who had been involved were people with skills and wide experience, an excellent work was done. The Alto Frio Board of Trustees at their Nov. 14, 1989 quarterly meeting elected the following officers: president, James Carey; vice-president, Don Higginbotham; secretary, Ted Bosworth; treasurer, Homer Stevens; asst. treasurer, Medford Keeth.

At the Lost Maples Bible Conference was held beginning Oct. 30. Dr. Bruce McIver was the preacher. Dr. Ralph L. Smith a professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Southwestern Seminary was the Bible teacher. Smith had been teaching at the Seminary since 1949. A quote from the Southwestern News, the news bulletin of Southwestern Seminary was, "Don't blame Ralph Smith if he sometimes does things backward. It's just that after 40 years of teaching Hebrew he moves from right to left without thinking." Smith had retired during the year but planned to continue as an adjunct professor.

The music director for the conference was Dr. Charles Williamson. Williamson had just retired from his profession as a Professor of Voice at Southwestern Seminary where he had been teaching since 1955. He had served as a soloist on the "Baptist Hour" the program produced by the SBC Radio and T.V. Commission. Dr. Williamson said "You cannot sing without some emotional flow of currents in the body taking place. That's why the scripture speaks of making a joyful noise unto the Lord."

Lonnie Rollins, Administrator, Alto Frio Baptist Encampment, was elected to serve as president of the Texas Baptist Camp and Assembly Managers Conference. Rollins said, "It is truly an honor to be elected to work with this fine group of Baptist leaders in this state." The group is a volunteer group associating together to coordinate the group's activities and share in their experiences, their methods of operation and such. Rollins' service as president was a volunteer position and involved no salary.

The First Baptist Church of Del Rio, from the beginning a supporter of the Encampment, officially donated its fine

dormitory to Alto Frio. For many years the church allowed the Encampment to use the dormitory without charge. The building had central air-conditioning, housed 60 campers, had a meeting room, and a dining room and kitchen.

Then two privately owned family cabins were donated to the Encampment. Thus, the matter of having cabins and dormitories given to the Encampment continued.

During 1980's there were a number of improvements. One was the quadrupling of outlets for the recreation vehicle park. Originally there were fewer than 20 but by the end of the decade there were more than 80. A new administrator's home was constructed and the Rio Frio Conference Center was completed.

## Chapter 16

### Phenomenal Progress

#### 1990's

The General Encampment, once called the Family Encampment, began in 1920 and the last one was held in 1990. The camp was scheduled for 1991 but did not take place. It was regrettable, though inevitable, that the General Encampment had to be discontinued. Only a few hundred attended the camp. The last available record indicated that about 400 registered. It was determined that most of those who registered did not stay for the entire General Encampment. Also, a study revealed that funds obtained from other camps were being diverted to keep alive the General Encampment and that program personnel served without remuneration.

The big construction plan for the 90's thus far has been the new dining hall and kitchen which is designed to include offices. The Encampment attendance has increased to the degree that new dining and kitchen facilities needed to be made available.

The old dining hall and other auxiliaries in the kitchen/dining hall will still be available for conferences, for large gatherings, and will provide smaller kitchen facilities for smaller groups.

It should be noted that after the Encampment enlarged its facilities that the attendance increased greatly. During the mid 1980's some eight or ten thousand people were in attendance at various camps, conferences, and retreats. In 1995 30,424 were in attendance at all camps, retreats, and conferences. That of course is the result of planning, of churches sharing their affluence with the Encampment, not only through gifts but from sending its members to the Encampment for the inspiration.

The Encampment began to a degree as a tent city. Now it has motel type rooms, dormitories, conference rooms, the open air tabernacle, a general purpose building which has a gymnasium that serves as an auditorium to seat up toward a thousand people.

The setting up of additional conferences, camps, and retreats to meet the needs of various groups contributed to the increased attendance. Women's workshops, a conference for retired ministers, the Lost Maples Conference for senior adults, adult conferences in spring and summer, the Pre-Easter Retreat for Youth, along with others too numerous to mention have not only increased the attendance but have enabled the Encampment to continue ministering to all age groups.

During the 1990's the Encampment began having more than one camp on the Encampment grounds at the same time. Encampment facilities making such possible are: the two tabernacles, the old one which will seat a large number and the new one at the north end of the Encampment grounds that will seat around 600, the Rio Frio Conference Center which would take care of a hundred to a hundred-fifty people and the Multi-purpose Building which would take care of perhaps a thousand people.

With these facilities the Encampment can take care of several retreats or small camps of three hundred to four hundred in attendance.

Men who have served in special ways in regard to Encampment facilities would include the Rev. James Todd, now retired at Mission, who almost physically installed the swimming pool. John Kight, a deacon in Baptist Temple, San Antonio, supervised for the Encampment the erection of the Multi-Purpose Building. The Rev. J. Coleman Turner gave much time directing the completion of the Rio Frio Conference Center. These men and others across the years have made an inestimable contribution to the capacity of the Encampment to minister to people.

In 1987 the total attendance was 10,904 and the total expenditure \$680,000. By way of comparison in 1990 there were 15,540 ministered to and in 1991, 17,580. The 1992 budget was in the amount of \$823,000.

A major building was the Multi-Purpose Building. It was basically a gymnasium with conference rooms, a snack bar, a gift

shop, showers and restroom facilities. During the 1980's the R.V. Park (recreational vehicle park) had quadrupled. There are now more than 80 hookups. Originally there were fewer than 20. Then a new administrator's home was constructed. Another major project was the Rio Frio Conference Center which is used for conferences of all kinds including the Post Office. The Rio Frio Conference Center includes the motel type facilities.

Then a new tabernacle which seats about 600 was erected on the north end of the campus. Extensive remodeling of all dormitories and providing air conditioning was done. Air conditioning was a prime need then as now.

There were a number of new types of camps or meetings. Those which had been initiated previously have grown considerably. The Pre-Easter Retreat is one of the programs that has grown considerably. When Baptist groups were not using Alto Frio, the administrator has made the facilities available to other denominations and church groups. Even Chapel 7 from Lackland AFB began coming.

The Lost Maples Bible Conference was initiated. It is a camp for senior adults held during the fall. Then there are senior adult camps in the spring and during August. Sometime during the summer there is a retreat or complimentary camp for retired ministers. The next new event is a continuing Hispanic Senior Adult Camp. It seemed to be a real need and attendance is mushrooming. In addition, retreats have been added, as have study training for staff, pastors, and others. Also initiated was a WMU Workshop.

The total number of people ministered to in 1995 was 20,424. The budget for 1995 was \$895,000. Receipts for that year were \$1,055,300. Imagine receipts in excess of one million dollars!

Contrast that with the \$6,000 in credit, services, equipment, and supplies in 1920 for the first Encampment. Also, contrast the 1540 registered for the first encampment with the 20,434 ministered to in 1995.

Surely, such growth in ministries, in people ministered to, in personnel on the staff, in facilities and in receipts provide great cause for joy and celebration on this, Alto Frio's Seventy-Fifth Anniversary.

A 1993 budget was adopted by the Board of Trustees in the amount of \$845,000. Receipts for that as projected showed that camp fees in the amount of \$675,000 was adopted.

## **CONTEMPORARY WHO'S WHO**

### **Tom Clawson**

At the time he served as the member of the trustees and as chairman of the trustees, Tom Clawson was a pastor in San Antonio. He was a very effective speaker and teacher. His family is a very musical family. One daughter, Cynthia, has won a Grammy and a number of Dove awards. She is one of the very remarkable gospel singers in the nation.

Upon his entering the field of evangelism and Bible teaching Clawson resigned as trustee chairman.

Since that time, Clawson has served as preacher for some of the adult or senior camps. He has also been a Bible teacher at a number of camps. These are indicative of his love for Alto Frio and of the responses of people to him.

### **William (Bill) E. Thorn**

Thorn was educated at Hardin-Simmons University and Southwestern Seminary. He was the son of Dr. Floyd Thorn, pastor in Houston and in Wichita.

Dr. Bill Thorn became pastor of the great Metropolitan Baptist Church in Wichita, Kansas. It was then that the author, serving as Missions Secretary, KCSB, came to know him. Thorn served for a number of years as the president of Dallas Baptist University. He is an excellent preacher and teacher. He has an unequaled sense of humor. It is the opinion of the author that Thorn is the best after dinner speaker anywhere to be found. The author, at the Lost Maples Camp in the fall of 1995, visited with

Thorn. During the conversation he complimented Thorn, saying that he was the finest after dinner speaker that he knew. Thorn grinned and said, "Well, I've had a lot of practice. Last night's message was number 6,181."

The interest Thorn has been able to engender in the people who attend has added much to the effectiveness of the Encampment especially in its ministry to senior adults as well as other adults. Only a few men have made the kind of contribution that he has made as a program personality.

#### **Dr. Nat Bettis**

Nat Bettis, a Texan, was educated in the Baptist schools of Texas including Southwestern Seminary. He served as a professor and head of the Bible Department at the University of Corpus Christi. He then served for a number of years as a professor at Oklahoma Baptist University. During the latter part of his career Bettis was a visiting professor at other Baptist institutions. He made a singular contribution to Alto Frio through his very effective Bible teaching for the people responded well to the content of his message as well as the spirit of the man as he taught.

#### **James O. Todd**

Elected officers who have served with distinction include James O. Todd. Todd served in the Encampment as a trustee on various committees.

He accomplished a number of things during his tenure as chairman of the trustees. It was his privilege to be the speaker for the dedication of the Multi-Purpose Building on July 5, 1983. That building was a major step in making it possible for large groups to meet the year around.

#### **Claude O'Neal**

Claude O'Neal served the Encampment in many ways for many years. He was the Encampment manager during a time when the manager or administrator did not live on the grounds. He had much to do with the development of the Encampment through its various phases of development. While very advanced in years, just a few days short of 100, he came to the

Encampment for the dedication of the Multi-Purpose Building  
July 5, 1983.

### **Bill Sluder**

The Rev. Billy Wayne Sluder, now Pastor, First Southern Baptist Church, Casper, WY, . . . for 22 years, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Cotulla and long-time Chairman, Board of Trustees, AFBE, is a native of Atoka, Oklahoma. He graduated from Oklahoma A&M with a degree in Forestry. While working as a Forester out of Wilmington, NC, he came to know Jesus as Savior. Not long thereafter the Lord called him to preach. He quit an excellent and good paying position, packed his belongings and family, and moved to Ft. Worth to attend SW Seminary. Upon graduation, the FBC of Cotulla called him as pastor. He has been there more than twenty years in his only pastorate.

He has served as a trustee of the Encampment for a number of years and as chairman (or President) of the Board of Trustees for several years. He has served faithfully and wisely during periods of crisis, of remarkable growth, and of extensive building programs.

### **Lonnie Rollins**

Lonnie Rollins graduated from the University of Corpus Christi, a Baptist school. While there he dropped out a year to work for an oil drilling contractor in Cuba to make the money to complete his school work. Graduating in 1959, he moved to Fort Worth to attend Southwestern Seminary. From that institution he received the Master of Divinity Degree in 1963 and stayed on another year to earn a Master of Religious Education Degree.

The year of his graduation, 1964, he became pastor of the Utopia Baptist Church in Utopia, Uvalde County, Texas. From Utopia he moved to the First Baptist Church of Devine serving as Associate Pastor. He served the First Baptist Church, Kerrville for a time and then became Associate Pastor at Trinity Baptist Church, Kerrville. From Trinity Baptist Church he came to Alto Frio as its administrator. Rollins became a trustee soon after moving to Utopia. He was then a trustee for a number of

years during the 1970s serving as chairman of the finance committee in 1973, '74, and '75. Also, he served on the executive committee in 1975, '76, '77, '78, and '79. He served then as chairman of the General Encampment Committee from 1977 through 1980. He served the Encampment not only as an elected officer but came to the Encampment Jan. 1, 1982 as its administrator succeeding L. A. Vermillion.

During his years at Alto Frio the Encampment has grown tremendously. There were buildings to be remodeled and a number of building needs were met. The largest structure was a Multi-purpose Building. There also were facilities for a recreational vehicle park. During those years the recreational vehicle park was quadrupled in its hook ups. Also, there was a new administrator's home completed and the Rio Frio Adult Conference Center was begun and completed. Then there was a new tabernacle with a seating of something like 600 completed at the north end of the Encampment grounds.

Remodeling, air conditioning, heating, and such were done. A number of different types of camps were initiated. Thus, it may be said that for most of his life Lonnie Rollins has been associated with Alto Frio as an elected officer or as an administrator.

### **Human Interest**

One outstanding contribution made by the Encampment was the establishment of camps for Spanish-speaking people. In South Texas Spanish speaking people are more numerous than others.

A great contribution was made by the Alto Frio Encampment to Texas Baptist and Southern Baptist boards, agencies, and institutions. Denominational speakers were present every year to present something relating to the institution, commission, agency, or board represented by the speaker. Always there were training union classes, Sunday School classes, WMU classes, and brotherhood classes. The institutions would include San Marcos Academy, Valley Baptist Academy, the Children's Home in San Antonio, various institutions of higher learning, and hospitals.

At various times T. C. Gardner, training union director for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, gave direction to the

training union work at Alto Frio. Also, Bro. L. H. Tapscott who was the state brotherhood secretary gave direction to the brotherhood classes at the Encampment.

## Chapter 17

### A SUMMATION OF HISTORY

#### A Perspective

Alto Frio Baptist Encampment is the result of a dream, a vision. That dream of S. M. York grew out of a perceived need. It became the dream of others. Fortunately, the dreamers were also doers. And the doers were gifted with a capacity to plan and execute. Not all dreamers have the ability to dream and then to find ways of making the dreams come true. Strangely, the fulfillment of the dream of the Encampment has exceeded the fondest and wildest expectations of the dreamers.

From the dream of one summer camp per year, the Encampment now has many camps. The first facilities were, by today's standards, very few and very primitive. With only a few wooden buildings, the grounds were covered with tents, resembling a tent city. For a number of years the dining hall would care for only a fraction of the people in attendance. So, there were not a few campfires and wood stoves among the tents as the people cooked from one to three meals daily. Now, the Encampment has a large kitchen and dining hall. Both are air conditioned and heated. Thus, there are facilities for many year-round camps. From a man with a few helpers who worked for a short while before, around the clock during, and a brief time following the summer encampment, Alto Frio now has an administrator, Lonnie Rollins, and a large full-time staff.

#### What Alto Frio Is

The Alto Frio Baptist Encampment is a Baptist camp owned and operated by the trustees elected by the Baptist associations of southwest Texas.

Alto Frio was born as an entity of the Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association in 1920. It remained so for only a little more than a year.

When many associations became involved, Alto Frio became its own entity, electing its own officers and conducting its own business. When a constitution was adopted, being its own entity was confirmed. Later Alto Frio was chartered, under the laws of the State of Texas, as a non-profit (or not-for-profit) religious organization.

When Alto Frio became its own entity, the president was president of the corporation and chief executive officer. The business manager was the chief administrative officer, at times called executive vice-president.

In 1958, the Encampment Executive Board took the necessary action for it to become an entity of the District Six Convention. Then, at its 1958 convention District Six took proper action to make the change official. District Six elected officers and conducted the business of the Encampment. The officers of the convention served as officers of the Encampment. That arrangement ended a few years later when the Baptist General Convention abandoned the district plan for missions.

A plan of operation had to be and was devised. It was determined that the associations involved would elect four trustees each. The trustees elected by the associations became the Board of Trustees of Alto Frio. The Trustees elect officers and establish the policies of Alto Frio. Thus, the Trustees elected by the associations own and operate the Encampment. They hire an Administrator who is the chief of operations and supervisor of the permanent and temporary employees of the Encampment. In many corporations the Administrator would be called president, or executive vice-president.

The present method of operation is very effective. The amazing growth and overall progress of Alto Frio confirm it.

### **Where Alto Frio Is**

The Encampment is situated on the beautiful Frio River, two miles south of Leakey, Texas. Picturesque hills form a splendid setting for the Encampment. The Frio Canyon is a part of the Hill

Country of Texas, considered generally to be the most beautiful part of the state. Huge cypress and pecan trees line the river. Massive liveoaks dot the Encampment grounds. The property consists of land given for the purpose of establishing an encampment. Mr. John H. Davis, donor, was not a professing Christian at the time he gave the land. Fitting it was that he was the first person to make a profession of faith, making the public decision during the second service of the first session. What a glorious event! He gave of what he had and then gave himself to the Lord. Originally the property was deeded, with a reversionary clause, to the Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association.

### **What Alto Frio Has**

The Encampment owns land consisting of 83 acres, more or less, plus a few acres secured in recent years. The facilities the first year were adequate for 1920. Gradually buildings and other facilities were added. In recent years, the providing of new and needed facilities has been phenomenal. The facilities that first year consisted of a tabernacle, two teaching tabernacles, a small kitchen and dining hall, two small dormitories, and many tents. Now, at present, the Encampment is debt free and has air conditioned and heated buildings to care for many. There is a swimming pool; state approved kitchen and dining hall; the tabernacle; a bookstore; a store; an office; conference rooms; air conditioned rooms for program personalities, church staff members and others; an indoor auditorium; a water and sewer system that is approved by the State of Texas; paved streets and many other facilities that include a good home for the Administrator. The buildings, equipment and land are valued at several million dollars.

A new building is now under construction to house offices and larger kitchen and dining facilities. The latter are needed to care for the larger camps now scheduled. The new dining hall will seat 1,000 as compared to 500 in the present dining area.

### What Alto Frio Does

At the first session the registration was 1,540. The most recent registration figures (1995) show that for the year there were 20,424 who attended the more than 30 camps and retreats. That comparison indicates the phenomenal growth in people, programs, and property. The first session consisted of one general encampment. Special groups of all ages now come to the Encampment at all times of the year for programs, retreats, and ministries that meet their special needs.

### Alto Frio's Early Who's Who

Through the very early years such men as S. M. York, Bruce Roberts, A. B. Mayhew, I. E. Gates, C. F. Andrews, J. H. Erb (killed in a fall in 1926), and Billy Mitchell invested much time, love and effort in the establishment, development and stabilization of Alto Frio. They were followed by such men as E. P. Kennedy, E. S. Lattimore, T. W. Gayer, M. M. Fulmer, Hal C. Wingo, Ferman R. Weedon, and others.

The women of the WMU and others contributed much. Among the ladies were Mrs. W. P. Coleman, Mrs. J. T. Yancey, Mrs. Coloma Roberson, Mrs. Clemmie Graham, Mrs. R. C. Tate, Mrs. A. M. Yeary, Mrs. A. E. Eardley, Mrs. L. C. Gray and others. Even today there are those who give of self and substance without recognition or remuneration.

Program personalities who contributed much during the formative years of the Encampment were Dr. I. E. Gates, Dr. E. C. Routh, C. F. Andrews, Professor A. C. Price, Dr. George W. Truett, Virgil Reynolds and others. Then came Dr. J. B. Tidwell, Dr. W. W. Melton, Dr. C. Roy Angell, Troy Campbell, Dr. E. D. Head and Dr. W. R. White.

### A Summary

Alto Frio, as such, consists of more than property, programs, and people. There are many spiritual intangibles involved. Such spiritual intangibles as deepening of Christian life, professions of faith and dedications to special service are but the result of the use

of invaluable intangibles and tangibles by Baptists for Christian purposes.

Early in my adult years, I did engineering work, supervising a topographic survey crew, surveying dam sites and profiles, determining the area and volume of impounded water, running terrace lines and helping design drainage channels. Also, I did some accounting and taught some elementary accounting classes. Yet, in my more than fifty-five years in the ministry, I have never found a way to quantify Christian faith's spiritual impact, inspiration, or commitment. How can things so basic to Christianity be measured mathematically or quantified arithmetically? They cannot, for no one can numerically quantify the dimensions of Christian faith, hope and love.

Nonetheless, a knowledge of the facilities provided, the monies raised, budgeted and used; the uncountable host of people in attendance over the years; and the number of decisions for Christ made year after year do give us a tangible vision of the worldwide reach of the ministries of the Alto Frio Baptist Encampment. For decades I have heard youth and adults alike assert that there is at Alto Frio a Christian atmosphere and climate unequaled anywhere else. The "Alto Frio Spirit" is a common experience and knowledge to those who attend. It is of God. It is conducive to pristine conduct, pure thinking and attentive listening to the voice of the Master. Only recently, a couple said that they decided upon marriage and gave themselves to the service of Christ at Alto Frio. In today's world more of such is sorely needed. The Encampment was born and has endured because it was designed to meet, and has met, Christian spiritual and fellowship needs.

Christianity is by nature a missionary faith; that is, it points people to Jesus, the true Messiah and only Savior. Also, it provides people with the basis (the Bible) for the noblest and highest moral standards and lifestyles.

Alto Frio is a Christian institution that ministers all year long to people of all ages. There is great emphasis upon the Bible, and the Bible presents truths that give life authentic meaning; make for

fulfilling Christian relationships; provide an unconditional, eternal love; and rob death of its terrors.

Bible believers have made and maintained Alto Frio.

### **PIVOTAL POINTS AND HINGES OF HISTORY**

During the seventy-five year saga of the life of Alto Frio there have been hinges in her history, milestones, turning points and pivotal points. Such have been brought about by events, by alteration of policy, by changes in status, by program personalities and by decisions by officials. Let us look at some of these.

#### **A Program Personality**

The coming of Truett as preacher was a turning point, for his presence did several things: (1) attract many people to attend, register and remain; (2) give stature and stability to Alto Frio; (3) convince people generally in southwest Texas that the Encampment was a viable and permanent institution.

Truett was then the best known, loved and trusted Baptist preacher. His concepts were lofty, his English pristine, his oratorical ability unequaled. His presence was commanding, his eyes piercing and his spirit nobly Christian.

#### **The First Full-time Manager**

Pete Towns was a fine Christian layman with multiple skills and an ability to supervise. His coming as resident manager provided the Encampment with year-round service and met the multiplying needs and demands. Thus, the hiring of him not only changed the approach to management but proved to be a pivotal point.

#### **Ownership Changes**

Changes in the ownership status were hinges in the history of Alto Frio. The Encampment began as an entity of the Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association. At the second session it became its own entity, electing its own officers and conduction its own business. A constitution was adopted. Later, a non-profit corporation charter was secured, with the president being the

president of the corporation and the chief executive officer. The business manager (or executive vice-president) was the chief administrative officer.

Then, the District Six Convention became the owner and operator of Alto Frio. The necessary legal action was taken by both District Six and the Encampment. That arrangement lasted for only a few years. Then, the district method of missions gave way to the area method. The associations that used the Encampment elected trustees who took over the operation. The trustees owned the Encampment, elected board of trustee officers, adopted budgets, established policies and hired an administrator and staff. The plan obviously worked well and continues to do so.

### **Properties Use Changes**

For a number of years, especially during the post-war period, many churches and individuals leased lots and erected cabins and dormitories. As time passed, several things happened and problems developed: (1) many of the buildings were not maintained; (2) not a few buildings were used without Encampment knowledge or authorization; (3) and the Encampment frequently needed more space than it had in its own property. An effort to rectify things over a period of years. was followed diligently and diplomatically. The result was that many cabins and dormitories were given or sold to the Encampment. Most of the buildings were remodeled and refurbished for Encampment use. Other buildings were removed. These changes added to the effectiveness of the ministry and provided space for use by Alto Frio.

### **New Types Of Camps**

At intervals, because of requests or needs, Alto Frio began having additional types of camps and retreats. Some of these were camps for Hispanic groups, women's meetings, pastors' retreats, a Pre-Easter Youth Retreat and the Lost Maples Conference For Senior Adults. Also, groups from other

denominations scheduled retreats or camps. The additions of ministries became a turning point in the ministry of Alto Frio.

### **Conference Center**

The completion of the Rio Frio Conference Center was an important event. It initiated the providing of first-class housing units and a conference center. It made possible the having of simultaneous conferences and retreats in high quality facilities and especially designed conference space. J. Coleman Turner, trustee and a life-long supporter of Alto Frio, spent much time directing the construction.

### **Other Facilities**

The swimming pool, the Multi-Purpose Building, the tabernacle at the north end of the grounds, and other new and enlarged facilities have kept Alto Frio abreast of needs for space to care for many people and multiple camps or retreats. Present planned expansions portend greater ability to care for more and larger camps.

All of these pivotal points, hinges of history, milestones, and turning points were of great importance. Yet, they were but responses to circumstances and perceived needs.

### **LESSONS FROM HISTORY**

Upon completion of the brief History of Alto Frio, I asked myself, "What are some of the things that I have learned from my study, observation and writing?" So, I listed some things. I share those things.

1. The establishment of Alto Frio was the fulfillment of a dream whose time had come.
2. The great teacher, doctor of the law and rabbi, Gamaliel, said to the Sanhedrin, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this be of men, it will come to naught; But if it be of God,

ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found to fight against God."

If a movement or ministry be of God, it will live. Therefore, it cannot but be concluded that God was in the establishment of Alto Frio and still is in it as it continues to minister with all it has and is in the name of our Master, even Jesus.

3. An institution that works within its original purposes does not lose its usefulness, insofar as those purposes are true to eternal principles.

4. Fortunately, from its beginning, Alto Frio has viewed each person as a whole person. Man is more than the sum of his parts. Man is a soul. He has a body. Taking this biblical view, Alto Frio has ministered to individuals as whole persons across the years.

5. To minister to the whole person in today's setting requires programs planned to meet specific needs of various groups, property to care for the groups, people who will dream and do, give and go.

6. This history is the recording of the A. F. heritage, its creation, its increase with passing time, its preservation and its use.

The Book's by the author Meeler Markham, 214 Harralton Circle, Devine, TX 78016; phone (830) 663-2494.

This Confident Faith, Broadman, 1968, out of print.

Everyday: Five Minutes with God (co-author), Broadman, 1969, out of print.

History of The WMU, 1980, out of print.

Selected Poems By The MM's (co-author); E. M. Publishing Co., 1991; copies available at \$5.00 postpaid from Devine address.

History of CCC Co. 874, 1993, a few copies available at \$2.00 postpaid from Devine address.

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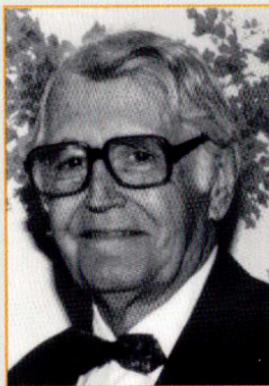
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Meeler Markham, President of Alto Frio Baptist Encampment from 1953 to 1957, was born in Ft. Worth; married Myrtie Manlove M. in 1937. Education: CWHS (valedictorian); RHS, HPU, TCU, Southwestern Seminary, UT. Secular positions: technician, Soil Conservation Service; chief inspector, Quartermaster Depot. Positions as minister: pastor; director of missions; missions secretary, Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists; and editor, Home Mission Board. He has published several books and is listed in WHO'S WHO In The South And Southwest and WHO'S WHO In Religion. Retired, he has served the Black Creek Baptist Church as interim pastor for eleven years.

ISBN 1-57502-588-4